







## IS POLAND LOST?

*by the same author*

**CZECHS AGAINST GERMANS**

# IS POLAND LOST?



by Philip Paneth

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## *Chapter One*

### IS POLAND LOST?

IN 1935, WHILE IN WARSAW, I PUBLISHED AN article under the above title, pointing out the potential danger that was threatening Poland from her two mighty neighbours. I wrote that Poland, a buffer State between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, would one day be attacked by one of the two, if not by both. I was thereupon approached by the collaborators of Colonel Joseph Beck at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to explain my reasons for this pessimistic forecast. I did so, marshalling my arguments as best I could. Two years earlier, in March 1933, I had had personal interviews with M. Louis Barthou, the then Foreign Minister of France, and Dr Eduard Benes, President of the Czechoslovak Republic, and, refusing to be influenced by their optimistic views of the situation, had kept a close watch on the development of events in Nazi Germany and, as a sincere friend of the New Poland, I was not feeling at all happy about that country's immediate prospects.

The officials of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs countered my arguments by confidently pointing to the Polish-Soviet and Polish-German Pacts. They were certain that Poland was safe from the Soviet, while as to Germany, Polish relations with that country were not only normal, but thoroughly friendly. M. Sciezynski, Director of the 'Iskra', the Polish official news agency, treated me to a brief survey of Polish history during the last few centuries and said that his country had

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learned a great deal from the Napoleonic campaigns. That, incidentally, was beside the point, as I had never doubted the courage and fighting spirit of the Polish people.

However, despite my gloomy prediction of four years ago, I could not say, 'I told you so!', even if I were that way inclined, for the possibility of what has actually happened in September 1939 had not occurred to me. The foundations of the Polish State seemed too solid and secure and the martial spirit of the Polish people, as typified by its great leader, Marshal Pilsudski, too strong for that. There was, of course, a Corridor Question and a Ukrainian Question, but while there were many who foresaw the aggressive intentions of the Nazis, no one believed that Soviet Russia had any territorial designs on Polish Ukraine. Indeed, in the course of my frequent visits to Soviet Russia I had come to the definite conclusion that if Stalin had any ambitions in Europe it was to secure a common frontier with Czechoslovakia and to settle the question of Bessarabia in Russia's favour; otherwise he was determined to keep out of Europe and concentrate his interest on the East. The Treaty ceding Bessarabia to Roumania has never been ratified by Soviet Russia and although the Russo-Roumanian agreements created the impression that Stalin had lost interest in the former Russian province, I was always convinced that he was only biding his time, even despite the optimistic assurances of M. Nicholas Titulescu, former Roumanian Foreign Minister.

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At the time of writing—the second half of September 1939—it is too early for any prognosis of developments in Eastern Europe, but I have strong reasons to adhere to my belief that, with the exceptions indicated above, Soviet Russia's interests lie in the East and that she will ultimately direct her policy accordingly.

At all events, my answer to the question, 'Is Poland Lost?', was and is a definite negative. The justification of this answer lies in the Polish national character, as reflected in a thousand years of their history and not least in the history of the Polish Republic. At present the Polish people are opposed by two apparently conflicting ideologies, Bolshevism and Nazism. I say apparently conflicting, because the difference is not very great. Apart from similarities of principle and method, Bolshevism and Nazism have become almost identical in one essential respect. Stalin has long departed from the principles of pure Marxism and Leninism and Bolshevism to-day is only another name for a new Russian nationalism, just as Hitlerism is a new and insanely extreme German nationalism. Both ideologies have been imposed on the respective peoples by force, and neither is an expression of the fundamental character of the great mass of these two nations. It constitutes no departure from the hard realism of political facts to say that this state of affairs, both in Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia, conceals the germ of disintegration, which must inevitably be brought about by the impact of any powerful force. That

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force may evolve out of the very rapprochement between Nazism and Bolshevism that we are witnessing to-day. On the other hand, the Polish people, despite the sudden disaster that has overwhelmed them, have remained true to themselves. Their unquenchable patriotism, their sacrificial love of liberty, their essentially democratic spirit, are all integrating forces which nothing can destroy, and they are only strengthened by the consciousness that the Polish people were the first to resist Nazism in Europe.

The cause of Poland's present and, I am certain, temporary defeat is not due to any factor connected with her national character, but to the mistaken policy of the Western Democracies which Poland herself was perforce obliged to adopt. Britain and France believed in a policy of European appeasement, allowing Hitler to achieve one important bloodless victory after another by means of bluff and broadcast speeches, and maintaining a touching faith in his good intentions and in his transparently insincere pledges. In a word, since the advent of Hitler the Democracies were on the defensive and Poland was obliged to follow suit, even if non-aggressiveness had not been a fundamental trait in her national character.

However, though for the moment defeated, Poland is not 'lost'. Her spirit is sound, as it has always been throughout her many trials and tribulations in the course of the centuries, and her body will only require a 'blood transfusion' which her Allies, who are to-day upholding Right against

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Wrong in Europe, will provide. Such operations have frequently been carried out with success in history, and it cannot fail this time. I put it forward as a practical thesis that the nations who represent Right and who carry on their banner the name of God, must ultimately prevail against the godless nations who represent Wrong. Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia are godless and proud of their godlessness. Their faith is the idolatrous one of power and brute force. Poland, a deeply religious nation, as well as her Allies, fights in the profound consciousness that God is with her, and that consciousness is a great and irresistible force not only in the spiritual, but also in the practical sense, as an inspiration to heroic deeds. This has been proved in the recent conflict in Spain. Whatever one may think of the merits of the Civil War, it is certain that Franco's victory has been a victory not for Fascism, but for the Roman Catholic Church. I say this despite my own personal sympathy for the democratic side in the tragic dispute in Spain.

In Poland the German hordes, in addition to working-class districts, have seemed to concentrate on churches and monasteries, but although they have succeeded in destroying places of worship and pilgrimage, they have failed to destroy or even to weaken the religious spirit of the Polish people.

It will be the object of the present book to give a survey of Polish history, both recent and past, and to show how and to what extent it has been informed by the spirit of religion and by those

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other high qualities by which the Polish people have always preserved their unity and integrity as a people, despite partitions and systematic oppression. In that spirit, and in those qualities, lies the hope and in my opinion the certainty of a new Polish national resurrection.

At the same time, I want to emphasize that this is not going to be a eulogy of Poland and everything Polish, but an objective survey of the history of a people to which Europe and the world owe a great debt as the Bulwark of Christianity not only in centuries past, against the Turks, but also to-day, against an even more dangerous enemy of Christian life and principles. Needless to say, as a publicist I was not blind to the defects of Polish policy during the past twenty years. On the contrary, I always viewed it with a critical eye and deeply regretted its errors. But that does not affect my admiration for the Polish people, which developed irresistibly in my mind despite this objective attitude.

And in presenting the following survey of Polish history, my long personal knowledge of Poland and the Poles will enable me to treat the events of the past in the only way in which history can usefully be treated, namely, in its bearing on the present.

## *Chapter Two*

### A THOUSAND YEARS' STRUGGLE

AS THE AVERAGE ENGLISHMAN IS NOT FAMILIAR WITH the geographical and geo-political factors that entered into the making of the Polish Republic, it may be useful to give a few data concerning the frontiers of the country as they were before 1 September 1939. These data are part of Poland's recent history in more than one sense.

Poland, with an area of approximately 240,000 square miles, had frontiers totalling some 3,000 miles in length, of which her sea coast accounted for less than 150 miles—or one two-hundredth!—including the Bay of Puck. These figures alone are sufficient to indicate the defence and economic problems of the country and, in particular, the increasing difficulty as regards her relationship with Germany. For there was no natural frontier between Poland and Germany, nor even a clearly defined language frontier.

The original Polish-German frontier, including the East Prussian side, was 1,200 miles, while the Polish-Soviet border extended to 875 miles. After the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Poles having re-annexed the Teschen territory, the German-controlled frontier was lengthened by some 600 miles. The Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Roumanian frontiers—the safest, because Poland had effective pacts with these two countries—were respectively 300 and 200 miles long, while the most troublesome frontier, that of Danzig, was only 75 miles, and that of Latvia 60 miles. Only half of the

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3,000 miles of frontier was natural, that is to say, marked by mountains or rivers, so that the geographical character of Poland was not determined by her frontiers. The vital artery of Polish commerce was the river Vistula, which was also intimately associated with the life of the Polish people. It was Frederick the Great who first said that 'he who controls Danzig—and therefore the mouth of the Vistula—has greater power over Poland than her own government'. That was the true reason why Hitler coveted Danzig and not, as he always claimed, the patriotic desire to bring a 'purely German city back to the Reich'.

It will be noted that Poland's longest frontier was with Germany, a fact to the significance of which I will revert later, when I come to deal with the history of the short period during which this state of affairs prevailed. Meanwhile, we will trace the most important phases of Polish history during the previous thousand years. For a Polish nation has existed and played a role in Europe, with or without national frontiers, for ten centuries and more.

The Polish tribes living on the banks of the Vistula, Oder, Noteć and Warta between the sixth and tenth centuries were already organized into States and nations. In the second half of the tenth century the Polish State appeared on the stage of world history as a unified political entity. The Poles were only one of many Slav peoples who had migrated and settled down, mostly without the necessity of conquest, westwards of the Ural Mountains, in North-Eastern, Central and Southern

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Europe, but all except Poland were welded into nations by leaders of foreign origin. Russia was founded by the Normans, Bulgaria by the Turanian tribes, and the first Bohemian State by Samo, a French merchant. The original founder of the Polish State was a Polish prince named Ziemowit who founded the Piast dynasty, and who was obeyed by several tribes. His grandson, Mieszko (960-992), was already a powerful prince.

The conflict between Germans and Poles was then already in progress. Mieszko was defeated, and in 963 swore fealty to Emperor Otto I. In 966 he accepted baptism and two years later the first bishopric was established in Poznan, his capital. In 973 Otto, at the peak of his power, held court at Quedlinburg and many princes attended with much military pomp, such as had not been seen since Charlemagne a hundred and fifty years before. Mieszko came to settle before the Emperor a dispute with Margrave Hodo. It had been Hodo's task to pacify the heathen Slav tribes in his March on the left bank of the middle Oder, but he was attacked by Mieszko and so crushingly defeated that he barely managed to escape with his life. The Polish prince, denounced to the Emperor, pleaded that Hodo ought to have known that the territory in question was not heathen, as he, Mieszko, had been baptized years before and had also converted his people to Christianity with the aid of priests from the neighbouring country of Bohemia. Further, he had sworn fealty to the German Emperor and was paying his tribute

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regularly. Otto accepted the argument and decided in Mieszko's favour. At the same time, he proposed that Mieszko should send his son Boleslaw to be educated in Germany, in order the better to absorb the spirit of Christianity. Actually, Boleslaw served as a hostage, to ensure that his father would continue to carry out his undertakings to the Emperor.

However, through the conversion of his people, Mieszko had also set a barrier to German expansion at the expense of the Poles. They could carry on their Christianizing wars against other Slavs, but not against Mieszko's people. For thirty years the Polish prince remained in favour with Otto I and his son, Otto II, despite several successful private wars against the Germans. Meanwhile, he devoted his attention to the consolidation of the State, building up a standing army and wisely attending to the problems of finance.

Mieszko's son, Boleslaw the Brave (912-1025), inherited a well-knit, powerful State. Incidentally, it was during this period that the first Christian Hungarian king, St Stephen, was crowned. During the succeeding eight centuries, during which Poland continued to play an important role in Europe, she frequently fought and defeated Germans, Czechs, Russians and Turks in alliance with Hungary. That is the historical origin of the Polish-Hungarian friendship which, at the beginning of 1939, led the two peoples to strive for a common frontier.

Boleslaw continued his father's policy and

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retained the favour of Emperor Otto III. Though nominally a vassal of the Empire, he was actually an independent ruler. In the year 1000, Otto visited Boleslaw in Poland. He came as the representative of the Pope to perform an act of adoration before the shrine of St Adalbert (Woitech), archbishop of Prague, who had been martyred in what is now East Prussia. Boleslaw had recovered his body and had buried it in the cathedral of Gniezno. Otto was so impressed by Boleslaw's power that he proclaimed him king, free from vassalage, and crowned him with his own hand.

Boleslaw was less friendly towards Otto's successor Henry II. He had now consolidated his power over his own territories, which included the Western Slav areas (whose inhabitants were later Germanized), in addition to the provinces of Poznan and Gniezno, the Corridor of the early twentieth century, but always regarded as the cradle of Polish nationhood by the Poles, and he now proceeded to carry out the policy of expansion which had originally been evolved by his father. Boleslaw, without much difficulty, annexed Moravia, and also temporarily occupied Prague, the Bohemian capital. However, he was soon dislodged from here by Henry, who was aided by the Czechs. He now transferred his activities to the land of the Luzy-cany, his object being to conquer the territory on the right bank of the Elbe down to the sea. Here he was checked by the heathen tribes living along the Middle Elbe, who were in alliance with the Emperor.

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During these campaigns, which lasted sixteen years, the first German-Russian alliance against the Poles came to pass. The Emperor secured the aid of Jaroslav, Grand Duke of Kiev, who was to invade Poland from the East. However, despite all the forces ranged against him, Boleslaw ultimately forced Henry II to sign a treaty with him. As part of this treaty he obliged Henry to send a body of Teutonic Knights with him on a punitive expedition against Jaroslav. Boleslaw was now undisputed ruler of a vast territory, which included the whole of Pomerania, the whole of Silesia, and the Duchy of Cracow. Boleslaw was also firmly established on the Baltic coast, and also had a temporary hold on the whole of Russia.

The dynastic disputes that followed upon the death of Boleslaw between the numerous branches of the Piasts were an expression of old tribal differences, intensified by characteristic Slav individualism and stubbornness, and there were repeated interventions on the part of Poland's neighbours. Under Mieszko II (1025-1034), German overlordship was again recognized and Lausitz and the fortresses in Russia were lost. During the years 1034-1038, the equilibrium of the country was disturbed by a struggle for the succession and in consequence of a Czech irruption Cracow, Breslau and other cities were destroyed. Under Casimir I, known to history as Casimir the Pacific (1040-1058), both the frontiers and power of Poland were restored. He was followed by Boleslaw the Bold, who reigned until 1079. Boleslaw went to the aid of

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Béla I, King of Hungary, against his brother, Prince Endre, and also re-conquered the Russian fortresses. Then he murdered St Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow, and was obliged to flee to Hungary. Boleslaw the Bold also fought against the Emperor Henry IV, and maintained the heritage of Boleslaw I.

Then came complete disintegration, until, in the year 1300, Vladyslav Loketiek welded the pieces into a unified whole once more. The process of dissolution began under the reign of Hermann Vladyslav (1079-1102), during whose reign Poland lost her power over Russia. Russia seceded in the year 1087. In 1099 Hermann, in alliance with Koloman Könyves, King of Hungary, undertook a war of conquest against Russia, but was defeated near Przemyśl. Hermann's successor, Boleslaw the Wry-mouthed (1102-1139), went to the aid of Koloman Könyves against Emperor Henry V, and under the joint onslaught Henry was obliged to retire from Pressburg. In 1109 Boleslaw defeated the Pomeranian princes at Naklo, thereby frustrating their movement for independence, while in 1121 he made further conquests in Western Pomerania and as far as the Island of Rügen. The problem of Poland's western frontiers became concentrated at two points, Pomerania and Silesia, both of which were at that time unquestionably Slav provinces.

Pomerania had been incorporated in the Polish Kingdom by Boleslaw the Brave, but the tribes inhabiting this province stubbornly clung to their

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old heathen faith and customs, and under Boleslaw the Bold they broke away. Thereafter, led by their own princes, they put up a stout defence against repeated Polish attacks. Boleslaw the Wry-mouthed used all his power to subdue them and after a hard struggle succeeded in finally breaking down their resistance at Naklo. He incorporated the eastern part, the Polish Corridor of the Versailles Treaty, together with Danzig, in the Polish Kingdom, leaving the western part in the hands of a vassal duke. However, the whole country was obliged to assume the Christian faith. Poland had thus accomplished her task, but failed to hold the whole of the territory for which so much Polish blood had been shed. For the priests to whom the conversion of Pomerania was entrusted were German, and within two generations the dukes of the western part owned allegiance to Germany.

Silesia was a bone of contention between Poland and Bohemia. Won by Boleslaw the Brave, lost under his first successor, and regained under the second, it had remained in the hands of the Piast Dynasty, and was a bulwark of the Polish Kingdom during the wars of Boleslaw the Wry-mouthed with Emperor Henry V. The valiant defence of Glogau, which the Emperor failed to take, constitutes one of the most glorious pages in Poland's military history.

However, the dynastic struggle went on, though some of the Piasts were working for the unity of the Polish Kingdom, like Henry the Hirsute at the beginning and Henry the Just, from Breslau, at

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the end of the thirteenth century. It is worth noting that Breslau during the Hohenstaufen era was a centre of the Polish movement for unity. When, in the fourteenth century, unity was at last achieved, the impulse came from another source. At this period dynastic hate drove the Silesian Piasts into the arms of Poland's enemies, and they swore fealty to the ruler of Bohemia rather than to their relatives. In this way the essentially Polish province was lost to Poland. This was not a struggle between Poles and Germans, but between Slavs and Slavs. The events which resulted in the annexation of Silesia to the German Reich belong to a later period, though armed conflicts between the Poles and the Germans during the Piast era were not infrequent. However, we are anticipating and must revert to the chronological order of developments.

In the year 1138 Boleslaw in his will divided the Kingdom between his sons, creating Cracow and its province a Grand Duchy to be inherited by the eldest male, with overlordship over the other Duchies. The first Grand Duke of Cracow, Vladyslav II, reigned for eight years, the capital of Poland being now Cracow, instead of Poznan. Exclusive royal jurisdiction was abolished in favour of a shared jurisdiction between the Grand Duke and the 'Magnates'. In the year 1146 Boleslaw IV ascended the throne. During his reign Pomerania was lost. He fought at Halicz in alliance with Géza II, King of Hungary. His successor, Grand Duke Mieszko, reigned only for one year, in 1173, and was followed by Casimir II, or Casimir the

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Just, who, during a reign of twenty-two years, succeeded in bringing about the unification of a considerable part of Poland. In 1180, at the Assembly of Leczyca, further privileges were granted to the priesthood, while the event of the following year was the entry of Boguslaw II, Prince of Stettin, into the ranks of German princes.

Under the Grand Duke Lesek I (1194-1227) there were further disputes concerning the Duchies of Halić and Vladymir (Galicia and Lodomeria); the Agreement of Zips pledging seven Hungarian cities to Poland was concluded; the Hungarian Prince Kálmán ascended the throne; the Church was declared to be independent of the State and celibacy was introduced everywhere. The year 1204 saw the foundation of the Order of the Knights of the Sword. Two years later the German knightly orders were summoned to an assembly by Conrad, Duke of Mazovia, and Chelmno (Kulm) and Nieszawa were handed over to them.

After a struggle for the throne of the Grand Duchy of Cracow covering the period between 1227-1234, Henry I finally became Grand Duke, reigning until 1238. The Teutonic Knights were then beginning the conquest of the Prussian territories, having absorbed the Order of the Knights of the Sword. Henry II ascended the throne in the year 1238. He fell at the Battle of Lignitz in 1241 during the first Mongol invasion of Europe. After a further struggle for the throne lasting two years, Boleslaw V became Grand Duke, ruling the country till 1279, twenty years after the

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second Mongol invasion. The purely internal developments during these periods included the gradual growth of the German population in the cities, and the evolution of the Order of 'Magnates' ('moznowladcy').

Under Grand Duke Lesek the Black (1279-1288) part of Russia was re-conquered and the Lithuanians and Iadwings were also subdued. During the years between 1288-1300 the struggle for the throne of the Grand Duchy was resumed, with the participation of Henry Probus, Boleslaw Duke of Plock, Vladyslav Loketiek, brother of Lesek, and the Bohemian King Wenceslas. Victory finally went to Wenceslas, and he was crowned King of Poland. From then on Poland once more became a Kingdom; and immediately after his coronation Wenceslas re-incorporated Danzig under the Crown—which seems to confirm Poland's historical interest in that much-disputed territory. However, the dynastic conflict was not yet over. Under Wenceslas II, formerly King of Hungary, Vladyslav Loketiek with Hungarian aid resumed the struggle for what he conceived to be his rights and, in the year 1304, occupied Wislica, thus securing a foothold in the land of his ancestors. However, it was not until after the death of Wenceslas III, in 1306, that Vladyslav Loketiek finally became King of Poland, and was crowned in Cracow, which thus became the Coronation City of Poland. Vladyslav reigned till 1333. It was with his consent that, between 1306 and 1309, Danzig was occupied by the Teutonic Knights and Pomerania was granted

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independence. The Grand Master of the Order, Siegfried von Feuchtwangen, transferred his seat to Malborg, or Marienburg. In 1307 the territory of Polonia Major (which included the district of Poznan) was attached to the Polish Kingdom. In 1320 Elisabeth, Vladyslav's daughter, married Carl Robert, King of Hungary, thus creating a further link between the two countries. By this time he had made an end of the small duchies and baronies and was able to have the old Polish Crown placed upon his head.

However, the following year there began the dispute with the Teutonic Knights. While the duchies were in existence the Duchy of Masovia, comprising the region of the Warsaw of to-day, suffered from the irruptions of heathen tribes—Lithuanians, Prussians, and Iadwings—and its ruler, Duke Conrad, invited the aid of the Teutonic Knights, giving them the land of Kulm in fee. From there he intended to conquer the Prussians and convert them to Christianity. The well-led Knights secured themselves in all directions. After subduing the Prussians with an iron hand, they brought German settlers into the conquered territory, but also obtained a foothold in the German territories and ruled them as they willed. Then Vladyslav invited the Order to help him in his struggle for Pomorze against one of his rivals for the Polish throne, King Wenceslas of Bohemia. The Teutonic Knights occupied the province, then refused to withdraw from it. Vladyslav thereupon attacked them, but after a stubborn fight, which developed into a

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general war, and in which the Knights were even supported by the Polish Duchy of Masovia, with the Luxemburgers on the same side, Vladyslav lost the game, with the result that for a century thereafter Pomorze and Danzig remained in the hands of the Knights.

On the other hand, relations between Poland and Lithuania experienced a considerable improvement during the reign of Vladyslav. Casimir, his son and successor, and the only Polish King whom his people invested with the epithet 'the Great', devoted himself to the internal consolidation of the unified Polish Kingdom. With the Teutonic Knights and the Luxemburgers he made a settlement on the basis of the *status quo*. In the year 1335 he concluded the first Treaty of Wysherad, whereby Casimir the Great ceded Silesia to Bohemia. Four years later come the second Treaty, whereby the Polish 'Magnates' recognized Louis, son of Carl Robert, King of Hungary, as heir to the throne of Casimir. In the year 1340 Casimir occupied the Little Russian Duchy of Halicz and Wlodzimierz (Galicia and Lodomeria in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy), and basing his act on dynastic rights, incorporated it in the Polish Kingdom. Poland thus regained the district of Lwow, or Lemberg, which had been Polish once before. Incidentally, the Poles were destined to fight again for this city at the end of 1918, when the defending 'army' included some hundreds of women. We shall revert to that epic incident later.

Casimir the Great also incorporated Volhynia in

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his Kingdom. Further, the Duke of Masovia, last of the minor Polish potentates, swore fealty to him, Kujawa being returned to Casimir, while the Teutonic Knights retained Pomorze. In the years 1351-1352, Casimir conducted his great campaign of conquest against the Lithuanians, Louis of Anjou, known as Louis the Great, King of Hungary, aiding him with 100,000 men. In the year 1355, a treaty was concluded in Buda (the old part of what is to-day known as Budapest), and on that occasion the details of Louis' succession to the Polish throne were also settled. In 1364 the University of Cracow was established. Casimir the Great died in the year 1370, leaving Poland strong and united. He was the last of the Piast Dynasty.

He was followed by Louis of Anjou, who reigned for twelve years, but left few traces in Polish history. In 1374 the succession of his daughter Hedwig was recognized by the Polish nobles by the Treaty of Kosice (to-day known as the Hungarian town of Kassa), which also confirmed and extended the rights and privileges of the nobles.

### *Chapter Three*

## THE GOLDEN AGE

AFTER THE DEATH OF LOUIS IN 1382, THERE WAS AN interregnum for two years, after which Hedwig reigned for two years with the aid of a Regency Council. She was at this time but twelve years old, a child brought up at the Christian Anjou court and officially engaged to the Duke of Austria. Yet the nobles or 'Magnates' or Polonia Minor evolved the idea of marrying her to Jagello, King of Lithuania, a mature man and a heathen of little culture, in order to bring about the union of Poland with the then powerful Lithuania. The enticing argument was that the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy would be four times greater than that of Poland alone, and would be able not only to resist any enemy, but also to re-conquer Danzig, which the Poles had never forgotten. In addition, there were two other important factors, the rise of the Muscovite Kingdom and the Turkish menace, and the prevailing boundary disputes between Poland and Lithuania.

The argument won and this marked the beginning of Poland's Golden Age. Arrangements having been completed between Jagello and the Polish Regency Council, Hedwig was married to Jagello in 1386. In the following year Lithuania was converted to Christianity, and the Russian territories were re-conquered by Lithuania. However, the union between Poland and Lithuania did not become effective until after the death of Hedwig in 1399. Actually, it

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was accomplished in the year 1401 by the Treaty of Krewo.

Hedwig was only fifteen years old at the time of the marriage, but she was her husband's superior in intellect, and it is certain that some of his most important acts were carried out under her influence; he yielded to her for the very human reason that he was deeply in love with her. It was under Jagello that the University of Cracow, founded by Casimir the Great, but allowed to decay, became one of the leading cultural centres in Europe; even to-day it proudly bears the designation 'Jagellonian'. Unfortunately, Hedwig died after only thirteen years of happy marriage.

The original object of the marriage, close union with Lithuania, could not be realized either in her lifetime or later, by the Treaty of Krewo. Jagello's relations gave a great deal of trouble, and he was even obliged to recognize his brother Witold, a man without qualifications as a ruler, as co-regent of Lithuania. There were, it is true, many emotional scenes of fraternal affection between Poles and Lithuanians, but it is clear that the union between the two countries was essentially of a dynastic character, and there was no merging of the two peoples.

At the same time, that state of affairs did not prevent Jagello from carrying through the Christianization of Lithuania. Also, as King of Poland, he covered himself with martial glory by the defeat of the Teutonic Knights.

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It was on the 15th July 1410, that the allied Polish-Lithuanian army met the army of the Teutonic Knights between Tannenberg and Grünewald. In a battle lasting ten hours the Knights suffered a terrible defeat. The Grand Master, Ulrich von Jungingen, was killed, together with a large number of commanders, marshals and knights, while the rest of their army was taken prisoner. In fact, the entire army of the Order was annihilated. For centuries thereafter Tannenberg became a term of utter humiliation to the Germans, and even to-day, five hundred years later, they cannot think of that incident without a sense of rage and shame. Incidentally, it was the Germans who had committed an aggression against Poland in wresting Danzig from her a century earlier!

The Peace of Thorn obliged the Order to render to Poland what they had taken away from her. In the year 1412 Jagello received thirteen Hungarian towns in pledge from King Sigismund of Hungary. The event of the following year was the Union of Horodlo, in virtue of which the Lithuanians surrendered their sovereignty and the Catholic Lithuanian nobles were adopted by Polish noble families. Between 1412 and 1422 a new war with the Teutonic Knights flared up, in which the latter were once more defeated and Poland regained several more cities, including Nieszawa. In 1425 the constitutional rights of the Polish nobles were again confirmed and extended. 'Neminem captivabimus nisi iure victum'.

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Jagello's empire grew and prospered. It was the largest in the Europe of his time, extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea. It was also powerful and secure from attack. At the same time, aggression was never part of Jagello's policy, nor has it been favoured by any Slav people, with the sole exception of Russia. In that respect, at least, the Poles have always been superior to the Germans, with whom aggression has been a tradition. The delegates whom Jagello sent to the Council of Constanza, the great international congress of the fifteenth century, represented the most progressive, Christian, lawful and non-violent principles in the political life of their age. When the 'Heathen' King died in consequence of a cold in his small castle in the region of Lemberg, he left behind a powerful country which was safe from attack both on its eastern and western frontiers.

That fact gave his dynasty an opportunity for the consolidation and extension of its power. Hungary, which was now exposed to the onslaughts of Islam, sought safety in an alliance with Poland, and invited Jagello's son, Vladyslav, to occupy the Hungarian throne, thus uniting the two countries under one King.

This fact was destined to influence the shaping of European history four centuries later, for it laid the foundations not only of a political but also a sentimental friendship between Poland and Hungary. That was why, at the end of the great war, when Poland was at grips with Bolshevik

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Russia, Hungary, having herself but recently thrown off a Bolshevik regime, wanted to hasten to her aid, and would have done so but for the refusal of the newly-created Czechoslovak Republic to give passage to the Magyar troops. This refusal became a sore point in subsequent Polish-Czechoslovak relations, for the Poles could never forget the indirect aid which Czechoslovakia had thus rendered to Russia. The Poles were also angered by a statement made by Thomas Masaryk, Liberator and first President of Czechoslovakia, to the British Minister, Lord D'Abernon. Yet history shows that if the Poles had a great deal in common with the Hungarians, the Czechs had also been closely linked with Hungary in the past. The two countries once had a King in common, Matthias Corvinus (1443-1490), the legendary hero who was King of Hungary and, from 1469, also King of Bohemia, and who occupied Vienna and Styria and fought gloriously against the Turks.

But this link between the two peoples was not sufficient as a basis for friendly relations between the two countries; no Hungarian Government could forget the Hungarian territories annexed to Czechoslovakia by the Treaty of Trianon. Hungary's revisionist ambitions, so strongly supported in England by Lord Rothermere, continued to grow in intensity from then until 1938, when they played such a decisive role in the re-shaping of Europe. Yet Dr. Eduard Benes, as Czechoslovakian Minister for Foreign Affairs, made every effort to

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improve relations with Hungary. I myself, with his authority, entered into conversations with Colonel Julius Gömbös, then Prime Minister of Hungary, but we never got beyond the usual political commonplaces.

The Hungarian friendship for Poland has not gone far, apart from expressions of sympathy, in the latter's present heroic struggle against brutal aggression, but that is only due to the fact that Hungary herself is afraid of the Third Reich, which is casting its sinister shadow as far as the Black Sea, and was obliged to remain neutral. Roumania has also protested friendship for Poland and has even offered the right of asylum to the Poles, with the exception of the Polish Jews, despite the fact that the latter have fought for Poland's independence as valiantly as any other section of the Polish people. I shall revert to this question later; my object here is to point to the manner in which the Polish-Hungarian friendship of four centuries ago has entered into recent events.

Vladyslav, or Ulászló I fell in battle against the Turks at Varna and is known to Polish history as Vladyslav of Varna. He was followed by his brother Casimir on the Polish throne, while his son became King of Bohemia and Hungary. Thus all the territories east of Germany that belonged to the belt of western culture were under Polish leadership. However, the stubborn efforts of the Jagellonians to secure and hold the Bohemian and Hungarian Crowns only shows that dynastic

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ambitions cannot really influence the course of history unless they are an expression of an ideal. The unification of Poland and Lithuania was based upon such an ideal, and that is why the union persisted for centuries. Bohemia and Hungary, on the other hand, were foreign to Poland and an accidental event was therefore sufficient to break her dynastic link with these countries. Vladyslav's son, King Louis of Hungary, fell in the disastrous Battle of Mohács against the Turks, and with him the Jagellonian line in Hungary became extinct. Their place was taken, without serious resistance, by their great rivals, the Hapsburgs.

In the year 1454—under Casimir—the Statute of Nieszawa came into being which once more extended the rights and privileges of the Polish nobility, particularly in the matter of jurisdiction and legislation. In 1457 Poland re-conquered the Duchy of Oświęcim and in 1462 the territories of Rawa, Gostynim and Belsk. The year 1453 saw the beginning of the Thirteen Years War with the Teutonic Knights. Pomorze, Danzig and Warmia were regained and the Teutonic Knights finally recognized the overlordship of the King of Poland. In 1475 the territory of Sochaczew was re-conquered, and from then on only Masovia possessed its own Duke. In 1478 the power of the Russians increased to a substantial degree and they occupied Novgorod. In 1484 the power of Islam made itself felt in the occupation of Ackerman, which interrupted Poland's Eastward trade.

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In 1490 Vladyslav Jagello was elected King of Hungary (as Ulászló II).

In 1496, during the reign of Johann Albrecht (Olbracht) the Statute of Piotrkow gave the nobles still further privileges, to the detriment of the burghers of the cities. In 1497 Poland undertook wars of conquest in Wallachia and Moldavia, with the consequence that the country suffered from Turkish and Mongol irruptions. In 1499 a war of conquest was begun against Moscow which lasted until 1503, by which time the throne had been occupied by Alexander for two years. In the year 1505 was held the National Assembly at Radom, where the principle of 'Nihil novi' restricting the power of the King was laid down, and constitutional and parliamentary government introduced. Under Sigismund I (1506-1548), who was also known as Sigismund the Elder, Poland once more conducted a campaign of conquest against Moscow. The revolt of Glinsk and its suppression was another important event.

At this time, fifty-six years after Tannenberg, the State of the Teutonic Knights had been formally incorporated in the Kingdom of Poland. The frontier between it and Poland proper remained unchanged until the partition of Poland. At the same time, the Grand Masters of the Order endeavoured to preserve as much of their country's independence as possible, and an effective union with Poland was never realized. Under Sigismund, last but one of the Jagellonian Kings, an oppor-

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tunity for linking East Prussia more closely to Poland was presented when, in 1525, Albrecht of Brandenburg, Grand Master of the Order, informed the King that he intended to join the Reformation and convert East Prussia into a secular Grand Duchy. He could not, of course, count on recognition from the Pope or the Emperor; the only authority for him was the King of Poland. Sigismund consented, on condition that Albrecht reaffirmed his fealty and he did so in the market place of Cracow. The scene is immortalized in a painting by Matejko, the Polish artist, which is known to every Pole. Perhaps the Germans invading Cracow in 1939 will be reminded of that significant event. At all events, for many generations after it occurred, Prussia developed and prospered as a German province under the Polish Crown. Such things were and are possible; it is only a matter of mentality and that is why Hitlerism sought and forced a bloody solution of the Corridor Question in 1939.

In 1529 Masovia was also incorporated in Poland, owing to the extinction of the Masovian dynasty. From then on Warsaw became the capital of Poland, and has always played a tremendous role in the life of the country, and a particularly glorious one in Poland's many immortal fights for liberty.

During the reign of Sigismund Poland attained a high level of prosperity and culture. Under Sigismund Augustus (1548-1572) Poland acquired

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Livonia (1561), while in 1569 the Union of Lublin definitely joined Lithuania and the territory to-day known as the Ukraina, including Kiev, to Poland. In 1573, the Cossacks were also attached to Poland, but in the same year Sigismund Augustus died and the Jagellonian Dynasty became extinct.

Under the last two Jagellonian Kings the Polish State enjoyed the fruits of the grandiose Jagellonian plans and their purposeful realization. Sigismund Major, who received the obeisance of the secularized Grand Master of the Prussian Order, scored no successes in the field of foreign politics, and had no ambitions in that direction. On the other hand, the wars of the Reformation which rent Europe at that time failed to disturb the internal or external peace of his Empire. Naturally, the religious wars did not leave Poland entirely unaffected, and Luther and Calvin had many followers among the Polish nobility. Indeed, about the middle of the sixteenth century the majority of the Polish Knights and Barons were in the Protestant camp, and while Sigismund himself remained loyal to the old faith, his son, Sigismund Augustus, married a woman from the House of Radziwil, one of the leaders of the Reformation in Poland, and was undoubtedly sympathetic towards the new religious movement. True, the Crown issued repeated repressive orders, but whereas in other countries the stake played an important and terrible role in the struggle, in Poland, which had a tradition of

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tolerance, it was fought out with other weapons, the mildness of which is exemplified by such measures as the suppression of the ecclesiastical courts. There was one bad case of burning at the stake in Danzig, but, as Gottlieb, the historian, assures us, that was due to political rather than religious causes.

As Wincenty Lutoslawski, the Polish philosopher, wrote in August 1939, 'the Polish philosophy is not idealism, but a Christian spiritualism'. That applied to the Polish attitude to the Reformation, as well as to the Polish mentality in general.

In this connection it will be interesting to quote another statement by Lutoslawski, who was bitterly attacked in the German-Polish Press campaign that preceded the war of 1939. It is contained in the following extract from the Lithuanian newspaper *Lieutovos Aidas* of the 2nd June 1939, and shows that the great political conception of the Jagellonian Kings survives among the Poles to this day.

'The ornament of the Polish dreamers is the Polish philosopher Wincenty Lutoslawski, a zealous propagandist of the Polish Messianic idea. Recently he presented the world with a new book entitled, *Poslannictwo polskiego narodu* (Mission of the Polish People), in which he writes:— "If we give real protection to the inhabitants of the Kovno territory, they will come to us. The Lithuanian politicians will realize that they have lost the game, and will

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immediately start to change their names and call themselves Poles, in order to obtain jobs in Poland in accordance with their pretensions. It is also probable that a suitable candidate may be found among them to become Voivod of Kovno. The posts of starosta (headman) should also be given to Lithuanians who understand Poland's mission and love their country. When, by means of a correct, prudent and tolerant policy, we shall have restored the confidence of the Lithuanians, they will be followed by the Letts, who will also ask to be attached to Poland. On the other side, it would be desirable to push Russia back from the Baltic. Petrograd must be returned to the Baltic peoples. Not until then will Helsingfors, Pernau, Riga and Libau feel safe. If the Poles prove that they do not intend to oppress other people, but only to guarantee their security against the common enemy, then Hungary, in peaceful agreement with Slovakia, would also join Poland. There could be no question of depriving the Hungarians and Czechs of their language, but the army composed of all these people would have to have a common language, and that could be only Polish. In addition to Bohemia and Hungary, Roumania must also become part of this association, with the same rights as the Czechs and Hungarians. Once Roumania is taken possession of, it will be superfluous to seek to conquer Bulgaria, the Southern Slavs and Greece."

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I am obliged to rely on the above mentioned newspaper for the correctness of the quotation, as I am unable to obtain his book or establish contact with himself. But the statement is in accord with the historical efforts up to the middle of the sixteenth century to bring about a monarchical union between Poland and the territories in question. Apparently, these tendencies had not been abandoned in Poland in modern times. Fantastic as Lutoslawski's outline may sound, history proves that it is far from that. At all events, it was published at a time when there was a lull in the centuries old struggle between Poland and Lithuania, after the tension of more than a decade following upon Pilsudski's annexation of Vilna, which had cut off Kovno, the present Lithuanian capital, from the *Hinterland*. Immediately before the war of 1939 relations between Poland and Lithuania were friendly—both were faced with the same menace, Germany. Lutoslawski's idea in relation to Lithuania was the same as that of the Jagellonians who, as already mentioned, never succeeded in bringing about a real union with Lithuania.

The nearest approach to it was achieved by the Union of Vilna, through which Poland and Lithuania became one country, with one king and one Parliament; but the internal administrations remained separate. However, a measure of real unity was later reflected in the fact that Poland's greatest poet, Mickiewicz, as well as her great national hero Kościuszko, was a Lithuanian. Mickie-

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wicz begins his *Pan Tadeusz* with the cry, 'Lithuania, my Fatherland!' But that only reflected a local patriotism, like that of, say, a Welshman, which did not affect his wider patriotism as a Pole.

## *Chapter Four*

### AT GRIPS WITH MOSCOW

IN THE YEAR 1573, THE JAGELLONIAN DYNASTY having become extinct, the hereditary monarchy was changed to an elective monarchy, the Primate acting as Regent between the death of the king and the election of his successor. In that year the first elected King ascended the throne. He was King Henry Valois, who reigned only until 1574. In 1576 Stephan Báthory, King of Transylvania, was elected King of Poland. His reign might be described as glorious, for during it not only was Muscovite expansion prevented, but the process was actually reversed and Báthory occupied a number of frontier forts. Under Báthory Poland also experienced a period of cultural and administrative development, and the power of the individual nobles was also curbed. Gregor Ościk, who had dealings with Ivan the Terrible, and the rebel Samuel Zborowski, were executed at Stephan Báthory's orders. Báthory further made extensive preparations against the Turks, but was prevented from meeting them in the field by his premature death.

Under the reign of Sigismund III, of the Swedish Vasa Dynasty, who was also King of Sweden (1578-1632), Poland began to decline. There was the first Cossack revolt (1592-1596), then the long war with Sweden (1601-1611) Sigismund being deposed from the Swedish throne. In 1604, the Polish 'Magnates' placed the usurper Dimitri on the throne, but he could

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only maintain his rule for a year. In 1606 came the rising of Nicolaus Zebrzydowski, which lasted until 1608. The following year saw the beginning of further Muscovite campaigns which lasted nine years, Moscow being occupied in 1610. Vladyslav, the son of King Sigismund, was elected Tsar, but although he never ascended the throne, Poland came out victorious, having reconquered large territories from the Muscovites. This success was followed (1626-1629) by a fresh Mongol invasion.

Sigismund was followed on the Polish throne by Vladyslav IV (1632-1648) in the first year of whose reign a new war with Russia began, with the result that Poland retained the territories conquered by her in the previous campaign. In 1648 the second Cossack rising under Bohdan Chmelnitzky introduced one of the blackest periods in Polish history. Chmelnitzky had the Jews slaughtered in their thousands and was guilty of the most horrible cruelties against them. Johann Casimir was on the throne. He reigned for exactly twenty years and it was under him, in 1652, that the 'Liberum Veto' was first applied. In 1654, Chmelnitzky surrendered to the Tsar who now started another war against Poland, while, on the other side, the Swedes also attacked and succeeded in occupying Warsaw (1655). The situation was only saved by a general rising.

The continual wars and internecine strife naturally led to a general decline from which it seemed that Poland would never recover. Under King Michael Wiśniowiecki (1669-1673) internal

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unrest increased further, and Poland was also compelled to conclude a humiliating peace with the Turks. In 1673, at the battle of Chocimi, Johann Sobieski scored a smashing victory over the Turks and the following year he was elected King as Johann Sobieski III. During his reign there was a renewed gleam of Polish martial glory. Two years after his accession Sobieski finished the Cossack campaign, but with the depressing result that nearly the whole of the Ukraina was devastated. His campaigns against the Turks appeared to be more profitable. Sobieski had already beaten back the Turks from Russia and had concluded a peace favourable to himself at Zorawno. In 1683, as the leader of the entire Christian army, he inflicted a crushing defeat on the Turkish host of 200,000 men at Vienna, then pursued and beat them again at Párkány, relieving the town of Esztergom, seat of the present Hungarian Prince Primate. Sobieski's victories over the Turks were the beginning of Hungary's liberation from the Turkish yoke. In addition to the débacle at Vienna, the Turks also suffered defeat at his hands in Podolia and in the Ukraine, and it was at this time that Poland became known as 'The Bulwark of Christianity'. Sobieski, incidentally, sent settlers to the Ukraine, while, on the other hand, losing several frontier towns, including Kiev and Smolensk, to Russia.

Under Augustus II, of the Saxon Dynasty (1697-1733) the disintegration of the country continued apace and the King was powerless to

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halt it. Charles XII of Sweden started his so-called Nordic War, in Lithuania there was civil war between Prince Sapieha and the nobility, Charles advanced with little difficulty far into the country, until he finally occupied Cracow. In 1704 the nobles deposed Augustus and elected Stanislaw Leszczyński, Voivod of Poznan, King, whereupon civil war broke out between the two kings, Charles going to the support of Stanislaw. The civil war raged until Charles was finally defeated at Poltava. In the year 1709 Augustus returned to Poland and tried to interfere in internal affairs, with deplorable results. In 1715 he found himself faced by the Confederation of Tarnograd, then, finally, Peter the Great of Russia undertook to mediate between the two contending parties and, in the process, deprived Poland of the Eastern Provinces near the sea and reduced the Polish army to 24,000 men. Two years later there was a *mute National Assembly* at Warsaw which accepted this settlement—under the menace of the Russian bayonets.

Under the reign of Augustus III, son of Augustus the Strong (1735–1763), Poland sank still lower both politically and morally, though this was soon followed by a revival and some progress in the cultural field. Under Stanislaw Augustus Poniatowski (1764–1795) many reforms were realized, but the Russians had by then gained such a hold on Poland that catastrophe could not be avoided. In 1772 came the first partition.

Since the period of Casimir IV the Poles called their form of government 'Rzeczpospolita Polska'

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or 'Serene Polish Republic'. Executive power was in the hands of the *Szlachta*, which Bismarck later feared so much. The monarchical organization was retained, but the King was nothing more than the highest elected officer of the Republic, while the Polish Constitution represented the most far-reaching attempt at democratic rule known up to that time. There was a much-quoted proverb—'*Nierzadem Polskai stoi*'—which expressed the Polish aversion to have a ruler in the same sense as other countries. Indeed, the Poles adhered to the ideal of freedom right up to the Great Revolution, and remained true to it when Poland once more regained her independence.

The first and only attempt on the part of Poland to entrust her destiny to a German Prince, the stupid Augustus of Saxony, led to disaster, and the Kings of the House of Wettin live in Polish history as traitors to and enemies of Poland. Before the accession of Stanislaw Augustus Poniatowski Poland stood helpless between her three mighty neighbours and Poniatowski, who was now to rule the country, was regarded as little more than the agent of Catherine II of Russia.

The only country that derived any benefit from the partition of Poland was Prussia, as Russia had in any case been the virtual master of the country for half a century, while Austria had no ambition to expand in the direction of Poland. On the other hand, the Brandenburg-Prussian State was able to unite East Prussia with the rest of its

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domain through the partition of Poland. In this connection Frederick the Great used the same argument as Hitler did in 1939. The result of the partition was as follows.

Russia gained the least as regards population. She took a strip of territory in the north-east, from Livonia over Witebsk and Plock to the Upper Dnyedr. The guarantee of her predominant influence on Poland, which she also received under the partition treaty, represented no gain, as she had already possessed it. Maria Theresa, who saw in Frederick her greatest rival, was given the whole of Southern Poland, approximately the same portion of Galicia which remained in Austrian hands until after the Great War, but without Cracow. Prussia took Pomorze, without Thorn and Danzig, but with Marienburg, Kulm, Ermia and the territory up to Memel.

The Great Powers of that day had thus created a balance of power between themselves at the expense of Poland. On the 3rd May 1791 (a Polish national holiday), the Polish National Assembly, in order to avoid further mutilations, voted a new Constitution, abolishing the 'Liberum Veto', consolidating the monarchical idea and settling the problems of the Church, the administration of justice, and others. However, Catherine II, in order to prevent Poland from recovering herself, arranged the second partition in 1793, which was a mortal blow to the country, for its territory was now reduced from approximately 600,000 square miles to 150,000.

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This was too much for the Poles. In the following year they rose in revolt and fought for their liberty under Kościuszko. They put up a heroic struggle, but could not prevail against their three mighty enemies. The decisive defeat of the insurgents occurred at Mateovec. Kościuszko himself was wounded and carried into captivity to St. Petersburg. The toll of death on the Polish side was appalling. At Rasławica, Szczekocзина, Chelm, Mateovec and Warsaw no fewer than 23,000 Poles lost their lives or what was worse, were captured by the Russians and subsequently sent to the lead mines in Siberia. According to reliable data this first rising cost 70,000 Polish lives.

In the year 1795 Poland was partitioned for the third time between Russia, Prussia and Austria. But the Poles had written a glorious page of heroism and self-sacrifice in their history. Kościuszko, with several of his generals—Niemcewicz, Wawrzynski and Ignac Potoki—were incarcerated in St. Petersburg, Dzialynski and a large number of others were sent to Siberia, General Kopiec to Kamchatka, while Niemojewski and Madalinski were imprisoned in Magdeburg, in Prussia, where more than a century later Pilsudski was to await his liberation. Other generals and nobles went into Austrian captivity and were imprisoned in Josephstadt. For the Polish people there followed a period of terrible oppression. The peasants were once more reduced to practical serfdom, although the Constitution of 3rd May 1791, had given them certain ameliorations. Religious persecution also

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became the order of the day, particularly on the part of Russia. The Union of the Churches was not recognized by the Tsarist Government and the Poles were compelled to assume the Greek Catholic religion of Russia. Prussia and Austria also made it their aim to 'exterminate' the Poles. First of all, they initiated a process of forcible Germanization by closing all the Polish schools and replacing them with German. In addition, a crushing load of taxation was imposed on the Poles, in order to impoverish them and render them all the more amenable to the wishes of their oppressors.

However, the Poles refused to take all this 'lying down'. At that time the European Powers had united to destroy the achievements of the French Revolution and a man had arisen to defend them—Napoleon. The Poles evolved the idea that they ought to go to the aid of France, so that France might one day help to resurrect their country, and they therefore formed a Polish Legion under Henryk Dombrowski. Exhausted as the Poles were by war and oppression, the very first call, in the years 1797-1803, was responded to by 8,000 men. This Legion formed the core of Napoleon's Polish Army, which was first employed in Lombardy, then defended the *Repubblica Cisalpina* and, together with the French, occupied Rome. They fought under Civita Castellona, Gaetam Magna and Nova. In these conflicts the Legion incurred such heavy losses that there was only a poor remnant left at the capitulation

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of Mantua, and even these fell into the hands of the Austrians. However, Napoleon, having just returned from Egypt, reorganized the defence and also reconstituted the Polish Legion. Within a short time the Legion had 15,000 men fit to bear arms. It was with this new Legion that Dombrowski fought in Italy and Kniaziewicz in Germany, contributing to the victories of Marengo and Hohenlinde respectively.

The Poles had given their blood in vain. They had 20,000 men available when they evolved the plan to march, under the leadership of Kościuszko, through Bohemia to their native land and liberate it from its oppressors. But the plan came to nothing, for Napoleon in 1801 made peace at Luneville and the Poles were not mentioned in the treaty. Instead, the Polish warriors were sent to fight on the Island of San Domingo, where the climate killed the majority of them. It was only four years later, in 1807, that the new remnant of the Legion was given a role of some importance. Napoleon was then again fighting against the Germans and gave the Poles hope of a restoration of their country. Kościuszko did not believe in the realization of this hope and took no part in the campaign. On the other hand, Dombrowski and Wybicki within a short time raised an army of 20,000 foot and 16,000 horse, the so-called Nordic Legion, which fought with Napoleon and, in 1807, thereby achieved the establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw, though this only survived till 1812. Prince Joseph Poniatowski, Prince

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Michael Radziwill, and General Chlopicki were among the prominent Poles who participated in the Napoleonic campaigns of 1807.

Naturally, the establishment of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw did not completely satisfy the Poles, as the territory it comprised was no more than some 60,000 square miles. However, they had liberated at least part of their country, and were hoping that the Duchy was the starting point for the attainment of a free Poland. Frederick Augustus of Saxony, who had been elected hereditary King of Poland by the Constitution of 3rd May 1791, became the Grand Duke. He had learned to speak Polish and had come to love the Polish people. However, the gratitude of the Poles belonged to Napoleon. Not that Napoleon was content with gratitude in the sentimental sense. He demanded, and received, from the miniature Poland considerable financial support, as well as soldiers. There were Polish armies in Germany, Silesia, and in the environs of Danzig. The Vistula Legion, consisting of three infantry regiments and one cavalry regiment, had to place itself at the disposal of the King of Westphalia, while the regiment commanded by Krasinski had to accompany Napoleon himself. The Poles, though prepared to make sacrifices for Napoleon, had stipulated that he should no longer take their forces abroad, but the Emperor broke his promise and when, in 1809, the Spaniards rebelled against King Joseph Bonaparte, who had been forced upon them, and therefore, indirectly against Napoleon himself,

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the Emperor sent a large number of Poles with the French army that was to crush the revolt. The Poles fought heroically at Madrid and Saragossa, losing tens of thousands of men. The remnants of this Polish army did not return to their native land, under Chlopicki, until the outbreak of the Russian war. Yet they would have been needed at home, as Austria and Napoleon had meanwhile become at war and Austria had sent an army of 33,000 men to the Grand Duchy, under the command of Ferdinand d'Este, in order to induce the Poles to secede from Napoleon. Although the home army of 13,000 men fought several successful battles, they could not save Warsaw. In the course of this struggle practically the whole of the Polish army was annihilated. Meanwhile, however, individual leaders under the central command of Prince Ponaitowski invaded Galicia with small armies and, with the aid of the Polish inhabitants who joined them, actually occupied the province, and thus compelled Ferdinand to evacuate Warsaw. However, this conquest was not made in the name of the Grand Duchy, but in that of Napoleon, in order not to involve Warsaw in further conflicts. It was not until Napoleon conquered Vienna that Galicia could be incorporated with the Grand Duchy, increasing its territory by a third, through the independent efforts of the Poles. However, the Poles had to pay compensation to Napoleon's French generals.

When, in the winter, Napoleon went to war in Russia, Poland once more became a theatre of

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war. This small country again raised a large army—80,000 foot and 23,000 horse—and a vast amount of money. Even the Convent of Czenstochowa, the holy place of the Poles, offered up all its treasures. The Poles anticipated the resurrection of their country from this campaign which, however, as all the world knows, ended in disaster. The Great Army perished, including the majority of the 103,000 Poles. The Emperor on his flight via Vilna, Warsaw and Dresden to Paris, was accompanied by two small detachments of Polish Uhlans.

That was the end of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. The Tsar of all the Russias was now master again. Most of the Poles now abandoned Napoleon, only Prince Poniatowski with his army stood by him, participating in the Battle of Leipzig and distinguishing himself so signally that Napoleon made him Marshal. However, Napoleon's star was on the wane. He lost the battle and Poniatowski, when his retreat across the river Elster was cut off through the destruction of a bridge, fought with his regiment to the last man and died the death of a hero himself. August Friedrich, King of Saxony, also fell in this battle. The command of the remnant of the Polish force was taken over by Prince Sulkowski, and later by Dombrowski, and they fought for another three months for Napoleon's lost cause.

After his abdication the Paris Peace Treaty made no mention of Poland. All the Poles received was permission for their army of 20,000 men to return to their native land without being disarmed.

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The army took with them the earthly remains of Poniatowski which were interred in the Royal Tomb in Cracow, where Kościuszko was also buried later. After the lapse of more than a century these two were joined by another great son of Poland—Pilsudski.

Incidentally, it is said that when the Germans in September 1939 entered Cracow they laid a wreath on Pilsudski's grave, just as at the rape of Bohemia, they had laid one on the grave of Czechoslovakia's Unknown Soldier. What infernal depths of hypocrisy!

At the Vienna Congress Poland was partitioned again and from 1815 until 1830 there was only a 'Congress Kingdom of Poland'. In 1830-1831 the Poles conducted a war of independence, which was followed by another in 1863. After the fourth partition of Poland only a shadow State was left—the approximately 100 square miles of the 'Cracow Republic', which was incorporated by Austria in 1846. The Republic was formed because the Powers represented at the Congress grudged Cracow to each other.

Before we go on to deal with Congress Poland we must refer to the causes of the rising of 1830-1831. When Tsar Alexander of Russia came to the Vienna Congress the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was under Russian occupation, and he was determined not to relinquish what he held. His proposal was that there should be a purely personal union between Russia and Poland and that Poland should otherwise enjoy complete independence as a State. The

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Poles agreed, dreaming of a peaceful eastward expansion after the manner of the Jagellonian precedent. However, Prussia refused to surrender her gains from the partitions and won a diplomatic victory. The Congress finally demarcated the frontier between Russia and Prussia along a line which remained unchanged until after the Great War. Cracow alone, as we have already mentioned, received an ironic semblance of independence. Thus Poland again regarded Prussia as her worst enemy and the Poles never forgot the German attitude at the Congress of Vienna, least of all when, in 1934, Hitler made 'peace' with Poland 'for ever'.

However, the Poles now found the situation tolerable. Tsar Alexander I even promised to re-attach to Poland Lithuania and the Ukraine, the territories that had once been annexed to her. When he proclaimed himself King of Poland, the majority of leading Poles loyally offered to serve him. Even Prussia allowed a measure of autonomy to continue in the Grand Duchy of Poznan, and Austria alone gave no consideration to her Polish subjects. But, as far as the 'personal union' was concerned, this artificial edifice eventually collapsed under the strain imposed upon it by the Russian police spirit, by the failure of Alexander I as King of Poland, the still worse failure of his successor, Nicolaus I, and last but not least, the ferment of freedom which began to work in the nineteenth century. St Petersburg held that the Polish Constitution was a mistake and worked for the complete

incorporation of Poland. The Constitution was, of course, infringed by the Russians, and the Poles were driven underground by police provocation. In addition, the Tsar committed the grave error of sending his brother, Grand Duke Constantine, to Warsaw as military commandant, in which capacity he gave full vent to his brutal nature.

That was the cause of the rising of 1830. The Poles, after only fifteen years of peace, were able to raise an army of 100,000, and although they could not win against the three Great Powers ranged against them, they remained in the field for eight months. The revolt broke out on the night of the 29th November 1830. It was begun by the young cadets at the Military Academy in Warsaw. They arrested the Grand Duke at the Belvedere Palace, disarmed the Russian Guards regiment and, with the Polish regiments, occupied the city. Remarkably enough, no one thought of establishing a revolutionary government. The legal Polish Government regarded the action of the cadets as an illegal *putsch*, but being composed of Poles, it could not help joining the movement and eventually placed itself at the head of it. All this government lacked was faith in ultimate victory. General Chlopicki, whom we have already mentioned, was appointed Commander-in-Chief, but at first he refused, because he was of the opinion that a military rising against Russia was sheer madness. However, his countrymen insisted and the General gave way, saying that it mattered little to him how and when he would be killed. His true

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attitude was expressed by the fact that at the outset he served in mufti.

The revolutionaries declared the deposition of the Tsar from the Polish throne. His armies, however, were advancing and eventually clashed with the Poles round Warsaw. The Polish army scored some successes, but lacked the aggressive spirit to exploit them and when, after three months' hesitation, the Russians under Paskiewicz finally decided to storm the city, the fate of the revolution was sealed, mainly for lack of faith on the part of the Polish leaders. The greater part of their troops fled across the border and were disarmed by the Prussians and Austrians. Of the original army only 20,000 men were left, the rest had fallen, or been taken prisoner, or fled.

The Tsar took a terrible revenge. Courts martial were established in Warsaw, Vilna and Kiev, some 250 nobles were hanged, ten times as many sent to Siberia and, of course, all their property was confiscated. From the Russian-inhabited areas 45,000 Polish petty nobles were banished or resettled. Priests and nuns were persecuted to such an extent that, for instance, many nuns were put in chains. The Latin ritual in the churches was forbidden, the Roman Catholic monasteries and convents converted into Greek Catholic. Poland was completely cut off from European civilization, so much so that young people under twenty-five years were not even allowed to cross the frontier, let alone go to foreign educational institutions. Even the Russian schools were closed to all but

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the children of the nobility, while tutors were strictly supervised and had to take an oath of loyalty to Russia.

The Jews, of course, were treated no better by the Russians. On the contrary, they were not only forbidden to wear side curls and a caftan and fur-bordered hat (the costume of Orthodox Jews, taken over from the Russians themselves), but were also excluded from every imaginable trade and profession. For the Jews had always taken their due share in the Polish independence movements. To mention only one prominent Jewish figure, there was Colonel Berko Jossilowicz who, during Kościuszko's rising, raised a Jewish Free Corps of light cavalry, nearly all of whom fell during the defence of Praga. In the following years Colonel Berko vainly tried to reconstitute his Jewish Free Corps; Polish prejudice against the Jews, despite their self-sacrificing patriotism, was such that the Polish governments were opposed to the establishment of a Jewish Legion. Colonel Berko therefore went to serve under Napoleon, together with his son, and fell in battle. His son, however, survived, and is said to have been buried in London.

At all events, the Jews fought for Poland in all the wars of independence, their patriotism unaffected by Polish anti-Semitism (which was in any case less fierce than the Russian variety), and after the rising of 1830 they were made to feel the full force of Tsarist savagery. They had to flee for their lives, and a stream of Jewish emigrants, or rather refugees, began to flow from Poland all

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over the world, to England, France, the United States of America, and even to Africa and Asia. There were Christian Polish refugees, too. However coldly these 'undesirable aliens' were received by the various governments, they had the sympathy of all the liberty-loving peoples. German poets, like Lehnau and Uhland, expressed the true feelings of their compatriots by their warm attitude towards the Polish émigrés. (Incidentally, this movement of refugees after 1830 reminds one of the position in 1939, when Hitler, after incurring the detestation of the whole civilized world by the bestial brutalities he practised in order to get rid of half a million highly cultured Jews, has sent his people to the slaughter in order to incorporate in the Reich, among others, two million Polish Jews.)

Meanwhile, Europe was watching with bated breath the horrible drama that was being played out in Poland. The 'Polish Kingdom' was now no more than a name. The army was dissolved, Parliament abolished, all the Polish schools and Universities closed, and Russian was made the exclusive official language. Nor was Russia alone to blame. In 1833 the three Powers involved in the partition of Poland met in Münchengrätz (Bohemia) to work out a joint programme of anti-Polish persecution, mutually undertaking to deliver the Polish 'political criminals' to each other.

But all this brutality and inhumanity could not keep the Poles down. In 1846 and 1848 they rose again, sacrificing themselves in their thousands on the altar of liberty. In Lemberg, Poznan and

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Warsaw the Russian hangmen were busy again and a whole legion of Poles was sent to the lead mines of Siberia, driven all along the awful journey by the Cossacks, soulless instruments of Russia, with their 'kantchuks'. The rising of 1846 made an end of the Cracow Republic. In 1848 the Poles fought not only at home, but also in Sicily, Northern Italy and Hungary, always with the ultimate end in view that their sacrifices might help to liberate their own country. At this time the political developments were decisively influenced by Polish poets and writers. Adam Mickiewicz, the great poet, was only one of the intellectual exponents of the Polish ideal of freedom, which never ceased to burn in the hearts of the Polish people.

By the year 1861 Russian oppression had reached an intolerable peak of savagery. The majority of the Polish poets and writers were exiled, the exponents of Polish culture and education persecuted and tortured, and even the wearing of Polish national costumes was forbidden. People attending the funeral of a known patriot, even if they themselves were not revolutionaries, were arrested. At the celebration of a Kościuszko anniversary 3,000 Poles were arrested.

The year 1863 saw another Polish rising. It was inevitable. Since 1861 the Poles had been deprived of freedom of assembly in any form, as well as of freedom of speech, in addition to all the other forms of persecution. Warsaw demonstrated by silence. It was a dead city, with the women in

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mourning. The churches were the only refuge of the people, where they gathered and fervently sang the national anthem. The Russians looked on, helpless against this passive demonstration. As Vladyslav Mickiewicz, son of the great poet, wrote:

‘It seemed as though there were two governments, a Russian one based on guns and a police force, and a Polish one ruling the hearts of the people.’

The unanimity of the demonstration was overwhelming.

Finally, however, the brutal nature of the Russians overcame any faint scruples they might have had. Declaring a state of siege, they surrounded the churches and as the faithful came out they were arrested for singing the forbidden national anthem in church. In some cases the soldiers burst into the very churches. The Warsaw churches were then all closed, and detachments of Cossacks with their terrible whips were galloping through the streets to prevent any sort of assembly. Count Muraviev, Governor of Vilna, confiscated the property of the Poles and had them hanged whether there was anything against them or not, merely in order ‘to show the rebels’. The Tsarist Government also introduced a reign of terror in Lithuania and in the Polish territories partly inhabited by Russians. The Poles were forbidden to purchase land and were burdened with crushing taxation. The art treasures of Vilna and other

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cities were taken to Moscow; Polish inscriptions in public were prohibited, as well as the printing of books in Polish, and even the Polish Bibles were confiscated; Polish speech was banned in public, so that the people could only use their own native tongue in the privacy of their homes; the practice of the Roman Catholic religion was made a punishable offence and the Poles were made to adopt the Greek Catholic faith by force; Polish churches and monasteries were taken away.

The Russians also liberated the serfs—a progressive act, but only apparently so. Actually, this was linked with a kind of Land Reform designed to expropriate and dispossess the Poles. In addition to all this, the autonomy of the cities was withdrawn, and municipal elections cancelled wherever a Polish noble was elected, all the offices being filled by Russians. Thousands of Polish peasants were dragged away to the interior of Russia and settled there, hordes of Russian officials being settled in Polish territory, to spy upon and oppress the Poles. Husbands were torn away from their wives, children from their parents. In brief, the whole of Russian Poland was ruled with a savagery which one would only expect from a government of homicidal maniacs.

The Polish people suffered in bitter silence and broke the oppressive 'laws' in secret, holding divine services in the woods and cultivating the Polish language in 'underground' schools, the wonderful story of which will be told later in this book. In addition, a secret National Government

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was functioning in Warsaw, close to the Russian authorities, although the city was crowded with Russian soldiery.

The explosion came in 1863 in the form of a guerilla war, conducted mainly by the landed nobility and the population of the cities, for the great mass of the peasantry refused to be carried away. Europe, as in the case of previous risings, watched anxiously, without, however, doing anything to help. In August 1864 the National Government fell into the hands of the Russians through treachery and its last Premier, Romuald Traugutt, together with all the other Ministers, was hanged at the Warsaw Citadel. The Poles were punished with unprecedented savagery, the complete dispossession of those who participated in the rising being a comparatively mild measure. The very name of Poland was erased from the official terminology and the country now figured as the 'Government of the Vistula'. A renewed campaign, with draconian penalties, was started against the Polish Church and the Polish language and, in general, the Poles were ruled with the scourge.

In the year 1882 the Russian Concordat with Rome made it possible for the churches to resume their activity and for the vacant livings to be filled; but the Poles never enjoyed any real religious freedom under the Tsars.

Meanwhile, the Machine Age had created an industry and an industrial working class in Poland, and this was accompanied by the spread of Socialism and the formation of Socialist organizations

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which, characteristically enough, were intensely nationalistic. It took many decades before National Socialism in this sense was adopted in Germany by the Social Democrats, and in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Jugoslavia, etc. by the Socialist Parties. It was one of these Socialist organizations to which Pilsudski later belonged.

They contributed in a large measure to the failure of the Tsarist policy of Russification. But it took the Russians forty years—from 1864 until the beginning of the twentieth century—to realize that they could not kill Polish culture and the Polish language. On the contrary, the more ruthlessly Russification was pursued, the stronger was the Polish cultural revival; the Polish national and cultural consciousness was too deeply rooted for the Poles to yield to the deadly embrace of Russian culture. Not that the Russians at any time ceased their efforts to absorb the Poles; even the concessions following the Revolution of 1905, after the Russo-Japanese war, were insignificant. Yet the Poles attained and maintained themselves at a high cultural level.

In the Austrian part the position of the Poles was more favourable. During the first half of the nineteenth century they suffered in Austria, too, from a severe police dictatorship and Germanization, as well as in other directions. When, in 1846, the Cracow Republic had been incorporated under the double-headed eagle, and the Austrian authorities thought they had detected revolutionary tendencies among the landed nobility, they

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did not hesitate to set the economically discontented Polish peasants against them. It was not until the '70's that the Poles under Austria were granted almost complete cultural liberty, far-reaching autonomy in Galicia, and a considerable say in the policy of the Monarchy as a whole. It was at the proposal of Count Julius Andrassy the elder that Emperor Francis Joseph agreed, in 1869, to grant Galicia the autonomy to which the province was entitled under the decision of the Vienna Congress.

After this the Poles were quite contented under the double-headed eagle, though they never surrendered their national ideals and continued secretly to plot with the Russian Poles for the liberation of Poland. The Austrian Government, in turn, was satisfied with the Poles, who were good citizens.

Very different was the lot of the Poles who were living under Prussian rule. Although personal persecution of the Poles had abated before the advent of Bismarck, and the Polish regions had gained such external advantages as a good system of sanitation, the Bismarckian policy of 'extermination' was carried through with true Prussian ruthlessness and thoroughness. The educational system given to the Poles was excellent, but it was purely German, and designed to eradicate the Polish language and Polish culture. The Poles were also mercilessly oppressed in the economic field. Whereas before the Revolution of 1848 this tendency had been comparatively mild, during the

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'Liberal' years of the century it became all the more pronounced, culminating in Bismarck's settlement policy and his notorious Expropriation Law. He wanted to transplant German chauvinism to what had been Polish soil from the dawn of European history, pursuing his design with brutal severity. For example, the wording of the Education Law of 1873, clearly reflects the settled intention of cultural repression. 'The Polish language', the relevant passage reads, 'remains part of the curriculum for Polish-speaking children, but the Government may in suitable cases direct otherwise.' It did 'direct otherwise', and down to the twentieth century Polish children were thrashed to recite the Ave Maria and the Lord's Prayer not in their native tongue, but in German.

Then there was the German policy of settling Germans on Polish soil. It speaks much for the resistance of the Poles that between 1896 and 1914 the Germans registered gains in land in only fifteen districts in the Provinces of Poznan and West Prussia and losses in forty-nine districts, despite the fact that the scheme was backed by the whole might of the German Imperial Government, and also by a special fund of 500,000,000 marks. It was anger over this failure that matured in the German Government the idea of the Expropriation Law which shocked the civilized world. A country which regarded the sacredness of private property as one of the main foundations of the State, and Socialism as a subversive policy, was dispossessing Poles who had owned their land for ten centuries.

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Was it any wonder that Germany, having sown hatred, reaped the same?

That was the position of partitioned Poland when the war of 1914 broke out. The time had come to shake off the hated foreign yoke and the Polish people, their spirit and vitality unbroken by centuries of awful persecution and repression, were determined to re-create a new, independent Poland. The Western Slavs, the Obtrocs, Lutics, Vilks and Sorbs had all become extinct, either in the physical sense or through Germanization; but the Polish people had survived, strong, vital and conscious of its great destiny, and was once more ready to raise the banner of liberty. They did not, could not, attack Germany or Austria because they needed the help of these two enemies against the third, the arch-enemy of Poland. As early as 6th August 1914 some of the Polish regiments, led by Pilsudski, were able to cross the Russian frontier.

Many thousands of Poles who were taken prisoner by the Russians were summarily executed as deserters from the Russian Army, or as *franc-tireurs*, or on any other pretext. The Poles knew this in advance, but it did not deter them, nor were they deterred by the knowledge that in many cases brother and brother and father and son were facing each other in the opposing armies. As if this were not enough, the greater part of the Eastern campaign took place on Polish soil, with all the loss of civilian life and devastation that this involved. The Polish cornfields became pock-

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marked with shell holes and craters and watered with Polish blood; but nothing mattered so long as the harvest was to be Polish liberty. Nor were the Poles better treated by the Central Powers whom they were helping than by the Russians. Despite the successes of the Polish Legion, which, together with the majority of the Polish people, fought the Russians with death-defying courage, the German High Command ordered the dissolution of the Legion. Many of the Legionaries, rather than submit to this order, sought refuge in Bolshevik Russia, and a large proportion of these died in the region of Murman and in Siberia. Only a small part of the Legion, under the leadership of General Haller, managed to reach France.

On November 5, 1916 the Central Powers recognized the independence of Poland, yet on 17th July in the same year Pilsudski was arrested and taken to Magdeburg. It was not until 11th November 1918 that he was able to return to Poland and seize the reins of government.

Even then, however, the war for Poland was not over. Hardly had the dawn of independence for that sorely tried nation appeared on the horizon when Poland was attacked by Bolshevik Russia. There were many fierce battles and the Poles, lacking sufficient munitions, were obliged to retire and the whole eastern part of Poland was overrun by the Reds. However, on August 16, 1920, despite all their handicaps, they scored a decisive victory over the Bolsheviks before Warsaw, and liberty and independence were at last theirs. To-

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day, in 1939, Soviet Russia, self-styled pioneer of a new civilization and a bulwark of peace, has taken half Poland without striking a blow, as a friend and partner of Nazi Germany. But during the intervening twenty years the Poles had created and developed a new State.

On March 17, 1921 the new Polish Constitution came into being. The following day Poland signed the Treaty of Riga with the Russians, while two days later they scored a great bloodless victory through the Silesian plebiscite, by which Upper Silesia was attached to Poland. In February 1922 the Polish National Assembly unanimously declared the incorporation of this territory. The seeds of two future conflicts were then already sown, one with Lithuania, and another with Germany. However, the Polish Republic marched on. Her eastern frontier was recognized by the Conference of Ambassadors on 13th March 1923 and on 5th April of the same year Poland as a State was recognized by the United States of America. All that now remained was for the new Poland to prove her viability. On 15th May 1923 Pilsudski again placed himself at the head of the State and later modified the Constitution. In the same year Poland became a member of the League of Nations, and remained so to the last, though the League had done very little for her.

All these developments were attended by passionate conflicts between the various political parties, between Poles and Ukrainians, between Poles and Jews. In the course of my frequent

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visits to Poland during those first years I witnessed many a street fight which I shall never forget, and many battles in the Polish Parliament and Press. All this was an inevitable part of the up-building of the new State.

What of to-day? And what of the future? At this hour of Poland's defeat nothing could be so heartening as a retrospect on Poland's long history, and particularly her history over the last century. Again and again the Polish people have fought, alone and unaided, against overwhelming odds, no less heavy than the combined might of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia; again and again they proved to the world that though their bodies could be defeated by superior force, their spirit and vitality could never be crushed, and that all Poles, women as well as men, were always ready to fight to the death for their national heritage. In 1914-1918, they played a decisive role in encompassing the fall of the Tsarist Empire; they will play an equally decisive role in the fall of the Nazi Empire.

## *Chapter Five*

### DANZIG: PERPETUAL BONE OF CONTENTION

EVEN THE COMPARATIVELY FEW AUTHENTIC DETAILS concerning the Polish wars of independence show what a terrific sacrifice of energy and human life these struggles involved. It was never the ambition of the Poles to conquer other peoples. What the Jagellonian Kings wanted was to unite all the Slav minorities and peoples under one sceptre, just as the Germany of to-day wants to unite all Germans in the Reich.

The Germans and Russians involved the Poles in many hard struggles during the centuries following upon the Jagellonian era. We will deal with the various partitions of Poland later, but a particularly tragic chapter in the history of that unfortunate country has been the problem of Danzig, which is of far earlier origin than the Treaty of Versailles. It was the cause of many conflicts between Germans and Poles, principally on account of the expansionist aims of the Teutonic Knights.

Danzig faced a hard and cruel destiny right at the beginning of its existence. It was originally founded by an indigenous Slav tribe of fishermen and received an influx of Polish blood early in its history. That is an incontrovertible fact, though I am no advocate of the German theory of blood and race. At the turn of the tenth century Danzig was already under the rule of the great Polish king Boleslaw the Brave. From the middle of the twelfth century (1148), by virtue of a Bull issued

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by Pope Eugene III, Danzig was placed under the spiritual charge of a bishop and attached to the diocese of Wloclawek, to which it belonged for centuries. Under the reign of the Slav Grand Dukes of Pomorze Danzig was transformed by German settlers, who were not unwelcome.

When the Pomorze Grand Dukes of the Danzig line became extinct towards the end of the 13th century, the city paid enthusiastic homage to the Piast king Vladyslav Lokietek as its rightful King. From the earliest times Danzig lived by Polish trade, just as it did until the beginning of September 1939. However, the city had hardly begun to flourish when, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Teutonic Knights brought down their iron fist on Danzig. The Teutonic Knights constituted an order of robbers whose members wore a black cross on their white cloak and who had settled on the right bank of the Vistula, then wanted to conquer Danzig, the key to the river, i.e. the left bank, the entire coast and the whole of Pomorze. They were called in by the Danzigers in all good faith, just as, centuries later, the German Army was called in by some Nazis in Vienna, but pillaged the city and murdered its inhabitants. On a November night in 1308 the Teutonic Knights began their reign of terror, organizing a blood bath in which no fewer than 10,000 Danzigers were estimated to have lost their lives, while part of the city was set on fire. It is significant of the consistency of the German character through the centuries that the Grand Master of the Order

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subsequently, in a document defending the action of the Knights before the Pope, alleged that the Danzigers had set fire to their own houses! The Germans of to-day made a similar allegation in connection with the destruction of Guernica, in Spain, by their airmen.

The occupation of Danzig by the Order was a decisive event, particularly for the Order itself, whose Grand Master, having previously reigned in Venice, now transferred his seat to Marienburg (as already mentioned above). The victims of the blood bath were mainly the Polish-Kashubian inhabitants of the city, the survivors being subsequently driven out of Danzig. For nearly a century and a half thereafter Danzig groaned under the heel of the Order. When Vladyslav Jagello defeated the Knights at Tannenberg (where the Germans now have a memorial glorifying another Battle of Tannenberg), the Danzigers awaited him as their immediate liberator, and the Knights who sought refuge in Danzig were driven out. Their last 'mad dog' act was when the Grand Master's brother lured the burgomaster and council, who were on their way to Vladyslav's camp, to Danzig Castle and murdered them all (1411).

The hour of retribution came when the Prussian barons finally went over to the Polish side and declared war on the Order. The Danzigers were among the first to volunteer, the Castle was stormed and the Knights extirpated with blood and iron. In 1457 the city even gave financial assistance to the Polish King Casimir who, in return, gave

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them a dual privilege (*Privilegium Casimirianum*, 1454, 1457) in the form of a far reaching autonomy and trading rights. Thus, after nearly 150 years of oppression under the Teutonic Knights, the Danzigers experienced freedom and prosperity for nearly 350 years under Polish rule. For the rest, all this was embodied in the Treaty of Thorn in 1466. The city's trade with the Netherlands, and particularly with England and France, developed considerably during this period.

The English, who had known Danzig from the Pomorze era, used to come to the city later, when it was under the Teutonic Knights, together with other knights of the west, in order to fight against the 'Saracens' of the East, i.e. the Lithuanians and Letts. As Askenazy records, nobles like the Duke of Lancaster who subsequently became King Henry IV, came in all good faith at the invitation of the Order and innocently participated in what were in reality nothing but raids for the sake of pillage. After the heavy defeat of the Teutonic Knights at Tannenberg all this came to an end. Peaceful commercial relations were definitely established between the Republic and London, Hull, Nottingham and other English ports and cities and were developing satisfactorily. At the turn of the sixteenth century Danzig reached the peak of its prosperity. During the Thirty Years War the Port did a terrific trade in corn and the Danzigers were happy and contented in their attachment to Poland. Indeed, they never ceased to give proofs of their gratitude to the Poles. In

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the seventeenth century they were already known as 'the straight, loyal, but stubborn Danzigers'.

In the year 1734 we see Danzig, which had once defended itself against the Swedes, desperately resisting the Muscovite Field Marshal Münnich, through whose beleaguering army they were cut off from Poland. The only help they received was from Louis XV, King of France, and son-in-law of King Stanislaws, who was very popular in Danzig, more so than among the Polish nobility. However, his help proved to be ineffective and after a siege of four and a half months by a Russian army of 50,000 men, Danzig was obliged to surrender and its leaders had to go to St. Petersburg to sue for peace before the Empress Anna. The result of this struggle was a city in ruins, the loss of many lives, and a war levy of a million francs payable to the victor; but the Danzigers were nevertheless good citizens of Poland.

Incidentally, Askenazy in his brilliant study shows that the great Danzigers of European repute without exception belonged to the period when the city was linked with Poland, and not to the periods when it was under the Teutonic Knights, or, later, under the Prussians. Askenazy also shows that although in old Danzig German culture was naturally predominant, Polish culture had nevertheless remained alive and was developing its organic connection with the Slav origins of the city and its Slav environment, its relations with Poland being steadily deepened.

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During the second half of the Seven Years War Danzig was a rich city. The Russians wanted to occupy it, but, instead, the Prussian menace arose. The King of Prussia, heir of the Order, came to take possession of the prey captured by the Order more than four centuries earlier, then lost by them. Frederick the Great exploited the decision of the Warsaw Elective Assembly of 1764 to introduce a general customs duty for Poland as a pretext to strangle Danzig. Frederick declared that this measure was to his detriment and he compensated himself at the expense of Danzig. (Hitler in 1938 was therefore following an historical precedent when he ordered an economic war against Poland by Danzig.) Danzig lived by its trade with Poland and through free shipping on the Vistula. Frederick established a customs post at Marienwerder, on the Middle Vistula, imposing extortionate duties. The Polish King, Poniatowski, a favourite of Catherine II, complained in St. Petersburg and Frederick was obliged to abandon this gold mine. He then began to flirt with Danzig, and this was followed by endless vexations, as when he alleged that there were thousands of Prussians of military age hiding in Danzig. Finally he occupied the territory of Danzig and, in 1770, imposed a war levy. During the negotiations in connection with the second partition of Poland he claimed, in addition to West Prussia, the city of Danzig. However, Catherine was still in her senses. The Danzigers, too, made a big noise and, among others, appealed for aid from Great Britain.

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Relations between England and Danzig were very intimate, dating back for some centuries. For a long, long time England had been importing via Danzig corn, and particularly wheat, for its city dwellers, as well as stout Polish oak for the masts of her ships, and had supplied in return fine cloth and produce from her colonies. Under the reign of Queen Elizabeth, George Carrew voyaged to Danzig as her emissary to assure the city of her favour and to convey to it the granting of important trading facilities. That was in the year 1598. Later, Danzig sent a mission of its own to King James I. Although there were cases of sharp conflict between England and Danzig arising from commercial competition, these were soon settled. In the year 1631, an English delegation concluded a satisfactory trade agreement with the Danzig Senate, while in 1668 the Danzigers secured from the Stuart King Charles II an interpretation of the Navigation Acts particularly favourable to them. In 1706 John Robinson, plenipotentiary ambassador of Queen Anne, was sent to Danzig, where he concluded a very favourable agreement which governed the economic relations between England and Danzig for a whole century and which, remarkably enough, has not been abrogated to this day.

It was only natural, therefore, that Danzig should approach the British Government. The Polish Ambassador in London, M. Bukaty, was able to convince the Government that Frederick's design was not only to impoverish and starve out

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the city, but also to attack Poland. Bukaty's memorandum created a deep impression. Edmund Burke in the 'Annual Register' (1772-1773) repeatedly protested against the rape and partition of Poland. In 1939 the British Government and people are once more dealing with a case of German aggression against Poland.

However, Frederick was not idle, either. Through his ambassador in London, Maltzan, he made repeated attempts to influence opinion in England, and he did so in the true Prussian manner, like Hitler in our own day. 'England,' he wrote, 'has no reason whatever to bother about Polish affairs. They are entirely foreign to England and cannot influence her position or interests in any way.' Unfortunately, Lord Suffolk, the Foreign Secretary of that day (whose policy bore the impress of the elder Pitt) was unable to protect either dismembered Poland or the City of Danzig, which was at the mercy of Frederick's blackmailing tactics. It was only in St Petersburg that something was done, and in face of the energetic Russian protests against the Prussian designs on Danzig Frederick the Great—in contrast with Hitler—gave way. Indeed, in the St Petersburg partition treaty of 1772 he was obliged formally to renounce Danzig.

However, the ratification of the partition treaty took a year after its signature and Frederick, like Hitler after him, did not intend to keep his promises and in September 1772, Prussian troops suddenly invaded the Danzig territory, occupying

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Langfuhr and Altschottland and, temporarily, the Hela Peninsula, which juts into the sea in front of the Polish-built port of Gdynia of to-day. Most important of all, they occupied Naufahrwasser, the Port of Danzig, hoisting the Prussian Eagle over it. (A few months ago I saw the Polish Eagle at the same spot; now it has been replaced, as a result of an act of violence similar to that of Frederick, by the German Eagle.) Frederick at the same time endeavoured to incite the Danzig representative in Warsaw, Gralath, against the Poles, so that 'Danzig should at last detach itself from Poland and submit to Prussia.'

The incorporation of Danzig in the Kingdom of Prussia could not, however, be effected by Frederick in face of the determined resistance and was only carried out by his successor, Frederick William II. It was by the second partition treaty in 1793 that Danzig was finally given to Prussia—for her military co-operation against revolutionary France. In the declaration of Frederick William II, published in February 1793, he said: 'The same reasons which caused His Majesty the King of Prussia to occupy several voivodships in Polonia Major renders it necessary also to take possession of the City and territory of Danzig . . . ' On Maundy Thursday, 1793,—a year before the Kościusko rising—Danzig rose in revolt, demanding, without the least incitement from the Polish side, its return to Poland. By May, however, Danzig was subdued and was compelled to take the oath of allegiance to the King of

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Prussia. That was how the Polish city of Danzig fell into Prussian hands.

Thirteen years later, in 1806, after the defeat of Prussia at Jena, Napoleon set foot on Polish territory, and in January of the following year he ordered a siege of Danzig. Polish troops played a prominent part in the siege, their fighting spirit being fired by the consciousness that they were fighting for a Polish city and for the Polish Sea. The Prussian-Russian garrison was resented by the population of Danzig, who looked on Poland as their liberator. For example, an attempt by Count Kockow to raise a Prussian Free Corps in Danzig was a complete failure. Soon after, the Count fell into the hands of the besieging Polish troops. The Danzigers even had secret communications with the Polish outposts whom they were regularly supplying with valuable information. Indeed, 400 Prussian officers and men deserted to the Poles and some of them actually joined Polish regiments. This is a proved fact which even the Nazi historians could not deny.

In May 1807 a large-scale attempt was made to cut off the city of Danzig from the sea, and in the latter half of the month Danzig surrendered. On the 17th May the Polish Legion marched in, followed by six French line regiments. The taking of Danzig had improved the position of the Great Army, and Napoleon created the title and dignity of 'Duke of Danzig' with which to reward Lefèvre, commander of the besieging army. In a

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report sent to Napoleon, which stated that the Polish losses amounted to 2,000 men, the population of Danzig was described as Polish. (To-day, in September 1939, we are filled with admiration for the handful of Poles who so heroically defended the Westerplatte, near Danzig, on a small island in the estuary of the Vistula, against all the might of the Nazi Empire.)

However, soon after this, following upon the decisive victory at Friedland, Napoleon and Alexander of Russia came to an understanding at Tilsit. The re-building of a strong Poland was frustrated by the resistance of the Tsar and the compromise which was arrived at resulted in the constitution of a small Duchy of Warsaw, without Western Prussia and without Danzig. As to Danzig, the city, with an area of two miles, was, by the treaties of Tilsit in July 1807, declared to be an independent entity, i.e. a Free City, with free shipping on the Vistula. In December 1807, by an agreement made between Danzig and Prussia, a rectification of frontiers was carried out, nominally under a Prusso-Saxon-Warsovian guarantee. Actually, however, Danzig now came under the immediate power of Napoleon, whose marble bust now replaced that of Frederick William in the Rathaus or Town Hall. A French Governor, General Rapp, was appointed to rule the city, and also a permanent French Resident. His name was Mesias! The city was garrisoned by two Polish infantry regiments from the Duchy of Warsaw.

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The succeeding six years of French rule were a period of decline for Danzig. The French Treasury made heavy demands on the city. The system of Imperial 'licences', as well as the vast extension of smuggling, placed Danzig, which was cut off from Poland by West Prussia, in a most difficult position.

After the defeat of Napoleon the old plans, those directed against Frederick, were revived. In the year 1812 the military party in St Petersburg unconditionally demanded the Vistula frontier. In January 1813, the Russians even occupied Königsberg and wanted to keep Danzig entirely to themselves. Frederick William sent troops to save at least Danzig for himself, but there he found the Poles again, who were determined to defend their city. The Russian High Command vainly tried to induce them to desert, but even the taking of Warsaw in February 1813, failed to deflect the Poles from their purpose. (The blood bath of Praga, the Warsaw suburb, which accompanied this incident, seems mere child's play to-day, in the light of what the heroic Nazi army has done to Warsaw in September 1939.) After the Capitulation of November 1813, Tsar Alexander had the French garrison of the city of Danzig taken prisoner and sent to Siberia, while the Poles were allowed, after being disarmed, to withdraw to the Duchy of Warsaw. That was, for more than a century, the last Polish garrison to leave the Polish city of Danzig. Frederick William III, in order to prevent a restoration of the power

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of the Senate, appointed a Governor and a Commandant of Danzig. However, even the contemporary Germans had to admit that the 'Danzig question' was indissolubly bound up with the Polish question.

In the course of his negotiations with Tsar Alexander for an alliance, Frederick William now expressly demanded a return of Danzig to Prussia, but Alexander delayed his decision, even after the Battle of Leipzig. At the end of October 1813, the Tsar suggested that Danzig should remain a Free City, but Frederick William and his Ministers were adamant.

They found a valuable ally in Lord Castlereagh, the British Foreign Secretary, who did not appreciate the Polish question in all its bearings, and allowed himself to be influenced by the Prussian insistence on the 'Russian menace'. Lord Castlereagh joined in the demand that Danzig should be returned to Prussia, and Alexander was obliged to give way.

To-day, England is at war over the same question.

However, the Danzigers showed their resentment against Prussian rule under Frederick William III no less than twenty years earlier under Frederick William II and forty years earlier under Frederick the Great. Keidell, permanent representative of Danzig in Paris, in a memorandum addressed to Lord Castlereagh, stated expressly that 'the Government of His Britannic Majesty had never recognized the temporary

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subjection of Danzig under the Prussian sceptre effected in the year 1793 and ended in 1807.'

Prince Adam Czartoryski, who was then in favour of union with Poland, strongly approved of Keidell's attitude and persuaded him to go to London in order to conduct a campaign against the re-incorporation of Danzig in the Prussian Kingdom. Keidell received a sympathetic hearing in the City and a meeting of representative London business men passed a resolution in favour of Danzig. The Parliamentary opposition, as well as the opposition Press also supported Keidell's demand. The *Morning Post* in August and September 1814, published articles inspired by Keidell decidedly opposing the re-incorporation of Danzig with Prussia. However, Prussia's spies in London managed to undermine his position, and succeeded in discrediting Keidell. Keidell submitted a second extensive memorandum to the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, and Lord Castlereagh, in which he referred to the privileges granted to Danzig by the Jagellonian King Casimir, demanding the liberation of the city from Prussia and the guaranteeing of free shipping on the Vistula. At the same time, he demanded the placing of Danzig 'under the special aegis and protection' (sous l'égide d'une protection spéciale) of the next King of Poland. But it was all in vain. The British statesmen's fear of Russia was too great and, consequently, their inclination to yield to Prussia all the readier. Indeed, the whole of Keidell's confidential correspondence

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was handed over to Chancellor Hardenberg and the Prussian Ministry was able to exploit this indiscretion of the newly elected burgo-master of Danzig to take all necessary counter measures.

## Chapter Six

### KEY TO POLAND IN PRUSSIAN HANDS

AT THE VIENNA CONGRESS (1814-1815) KEIDELL'S efforts were completely frustrated by Hardenberg. By the treaties of May and June 1815, between the partitioning Powers, and the final act of the Congress, Danzig was finally awarded to Prussia. The Polish-Kashubians, the indigenous Slav population of the territory who had lived there since the foundation of the city, and before, comforted themselves with the saying, '*Nigde do zgube nie przynda Kaszube!*'—Kashubia can never perish! The Polish Kings and the Pomorze-Kashubian princes were symbols, but in view of the autonomous situation of Danzig the Polish Republic, out of exaggerated consideration, failed to prevent the passive Germanization of the Kashubians living under the Polish sceptre. The Kashubian language possessed certain characteristics of its ancient Slav origin, but in time became assimilated to the Polish language, and finally became a Polish dialect, just as the Kashubians themselves became a Polish tribe. However, the outbreak of the November Revolution in Warsaw, and the Russo-Polish war of 1830-31 in general, made it possible for Danzig's intimate relations with Poland to be abused in a hostile sense. After the suppression of the November Revolution and the abolition of the Polish Constitution, the Russians ceased to pay any regard to the political and economic interests of Congress Poland.

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The Berlin Government carried on a Russo-phile policy. Frederick William III, father-in-law of Nicolaus I, gave repeated proofs of his friendship towards Russia. In the January rising of 1863, the Berlin Government hastened, though in a rather discreet manner, to support the Russians against the insurgents. That was the basis of the notorious secret treaty of February, 1863, between Prussia and Russia which was attacked not only by England and France, but also by the progressive opposition in Prussia itself. The Prussian Prime Minister, Prince Bismarck, defended his anti-Polish policy with the argument that if the Polish revolt were successful, the Poles would demand the return of Danzig to Poland. When the British Ambassador, Sir Andrew Buchanan, spoke to him about the secret treaty, Bismarck told him, in confidence, that if an independent Poland were proclaimed, 'the first effort of the new (Polish) State would be to recover Danzig,' and this would be 'a stab at the heart of Prussia.'

However, Danzig's corn and timber trade was very seriously affected by the rapid industrial development of Congress Poland and the building of a railway network there, particularly the Vistula Railway, which was concurrent with the complete neglect of the river, with the result that the river bed became filled with sand. In addition, Libau and Riga, which were intensively cultivated by the Russians, became dangerous competitors to Danzig. On the Prussian side Danzig was relegated to the status of a provincial town, since from their point

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of view the possession of Danzig was only of importance in the negative sense, to bar Poland's access to the sea and to prevent a Polish Danzig from competing with the Prussian ports of Königsberg and Stettin, and later also Kiel and Hamburg. This was manifested quite clearly during the construction of the Berlin-Königsberg railway line in 1853, when Danzig was deliberately by-passed. Naturally, in the Prussianized Danzig Polish trade went into a steady decline.

Great Britain's trade interest in Danzig were also seriously affected. The British Consul, Sir William White (1865-1875) repeatedly called the attention of the Government to this fact. Sir William, grandson of Sir W. Neville Gardiner, last British envoy to the Polish Republic, had been Consul General in Warsaw at the time of the January rising in 1863, had been recalled at the request of the Russian Government, and had subsequently attracted praise by his work as ambassador in Constantinople. He was linked with Poland by family ties and remained a friend of the Poles to the day of his death. He realized the economic importance of Danzig not only for Poland, but also for Europe. Sir William was present when, at the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, Danzig saw the French banner once more.

Thus Danzig suffered badly through its incorporation with Prussia. But the heaviest blow came when, with the formation of the Reich, a fundamental change in German trade policy in a protectionist direction was introduced, with special

regard to the interests of the agrarian caste—actually the ruling caste—and particularly those of the East Prussian Junkers. In 1879 Bismarck increased the customs duties on corn and timber from Poland and Russia to a substantial extent, and in 1885 a further increase was imposed under pressure from the German agrarians. That was a still worse blow for Danzig.

In 1894, the Iron Chancellor in an important speech declared that Germany must keep a 'watch on the Warthe and the Vistula', where she could not afford to lose an inch of territory. If a Polish Kingdom were established it would always ally itself with Germany's enemies, it would be an active, aggressive Power out to conquer West Prussia and Danzig. Shortly after this speech Bismarck, then eighty years old, said: 'It is my political conviction that although Russia as a neighbour is often inconvenient and dangerous, a Polish neighbour would be more so. And if I had the choice between the two, I would rather deal with the Tsar in St Petersburg than with the Szlachta in Warsaw. If the Polish dream came true, then Danzig would be immediately in danger. . . . Danzig would be the first object of the covetousness of a Warsovian State, it would be a necessity to a Polish State.'

In the year 1939 Hitler has pursued the same policy. In this matter, as generally in his entire political conception, Hitler has his eyes fixed on the historical periods which saw the rise of German power; he overlooks the periods of decline.

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The Bismarckian policy, which frankly aimed at the 'extermination' of the Poles, and was carried on in an intensified form by Prince Bülow, the third Reich Chancellor (1901, 1906-7) by means of repressive educational and expropriation acts, served to arouse the instinct of self-preservation in the Poles. But the deliberate economic destruction of Danzig, and its separation from Poland was, and remained, an open wound. The partial improvement of the Vistula estuary by the Germans made little difference to Danzig, in view of the neglect of the Middle Vistula in Congress Poland. The steamship service established on the Vistula in 1848 could also not develop and by the year 1911 the undertaking was of little significance. The ports of Königsberg and Stettin, which were first supported to the detriment of Danzig by Frederick II, continued to be serious competitors and Stettin, for instance, was able to quote lower rates for Lodz than Danzig.

A purely external increase, an increase of territory, was effected by a Government decree against the will of Danzig! The incorporation of fourteen suburbs in 1877 brought the number of the population to 100,000; by 1910 Danzig had 170,000 inhabitants, far more than many other German ports. Nearly a third of them are still Catholics, despite the German influence.

From 1912, the anti-Polish tendency gained the upper hand in Danzig. Yet in October 1918, the business community of Danzig asked that the city should be incorporated with Poland. It was the

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German opposition which resulted in the compromise of making Danzig into a Free City.

Still, the desire of the German Danzig to return to the Polish economic sphere remained predominant, particularly when the Poles, with a terrific expenditure of money and energy, began to build the new port of Gdynia. Under German political pressure the Danzigers complained that Gdynia was doing them harm, but that was by no means the case. It was repeatedly proved to me in Warsaw government circles that Poland was able to exploit both ports. Actually, a vast amount of Polish trade went through Danzig, but the Poles had to insist on their full rights. This was the task of the Polish High Commissioner, while a League Commissioner was appointed to see that the Danzig Statute was carried out. The many political differences between Danzig and the Poles arose in consequence of German instigation, but the conflict in and for Danzig could easily have been localized, but for the fact that the Danzig Nazis were invited to 'seek aid' from Nazi Germany.

The Danzigers endeavoured to push themselves forward at Geneva and to secure advantages for themselves at the expense of Polish trade policy, but instead of going to Warsaw they always went to Berlin.

In the year 1935, when the League representative of the Senate had assured me, in Geneva, that Danzig had nothing whatever to do with National Socialist Germany, I went to Danzig and visited the offices of the President of the Senate and the

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propaganda chief. Over the latter's head hung a portrait of Hitler, who at that time had but few followers in Danzig, while the Social Democrats were still strong. When I told him that there was an impression in Geneva that Danzig policy was dictated by the National Socialists, the propaganda chief embarked on a long dissertation and tried to prove that this impression was false. However, the picture on the wall was an eloquent contradiction of his words. True, Danzig was engaged in a hard economic struggle. Poland was now the mightier partner, and Gdynia was taking more and more of the export-import trade. But the initial negotiations of the Senate with Poland had produced compromises which were quite satisfactory from the economic point of view—only they did not suit the Third Reich. The Danzig question had cost so much blood in the course of its history; it was to lead to still more bloodshed by the will of Hitler.

It would take us too far to marshal all the facts and arguments here. But let us contrast the historical facts quoted above with a German official statement which clearly shows what the real interests of Hitler Germany were and are in this matter. The statement relates to an economic and tariff war, and deals with the alleged attempts of the Polish Government to evade the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors, whereby customs duties within Danzig territory were to be collected by Danzig customs officials, while Poland was only to exercise supervision through a suitable

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number of customs inspectors. The statement asserts that the Poles appointed an enormous number of inspectors, entirely out of proportion with what was required, so that there were two and a half times as many Polish inspectors as Danzig officials of similar rank. It goes on to bemoan the pitiable situation of the poor Danzigers under Polish economic oppression, and adds that, in any case, the Polish officials had never been trained for customs service and were in reality Polish spies.

Now, this entirely untrue and one-sided statement gives the impression that Germany was anxious to help the Danzigers to obtain their economic rights from Poland. But that impression would be false. Actually, the Danzigers had frequently complained about the inadequate turnover with Poland, and the President of the Senate, whom I visited several times, tried to convince me that there was ample cause for such complaints. But when I called on the Polish High Commissioner, M. Papée, I gained a very different impression, for he was able to prove to me with detailed figures that Danzig's turnover with Poland was entirely satisfactory to Danzig, and entirely adequate. It was clear to me that Poland was indeed making honest efforts to come to an understanding with Danzig in the economic sphere. On the other hand, Hitler Germany was endeavouring to exploit any differences between Danzig and Poland for its own political ends.

At the end of August, 1939, Hitler formulated his demands quite clearly, stating that he wanted

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the return of both Danzig and the Corridor to the Reich. Although, in his letter to M. Daladier, the French Prime Minister, he appeared to leave the door open for peaceful negotiations, he insisted on his demands all the more emphatically because the Anglo-French declarations had made it clear that any act directed against Danzig and the Corridor would mean war.

Then Danzig re-joined the Reich, 'voluntarily', like Austria, the role which the traitor Seys-Inquart played in delivering his country to Hitler being assumed by Gauleiter Förster. But that was not all. Förster's act was followed by a Nazi invasion of the Corridor and the rest of Poland, as far as Lodz, Cracow and Warsaw. In his war-like speech Hitler had promised Poland to 'teach her a lesson', and he did so. At least, that must be his view. The view of the world is that it was Poland, the heroic defenders of the Westerplatte, Modlin and Warsaw, and the Polish people as a whole, who taught the lesson by their dauntlessness even in the face of the aerial bombardment of undefended cities by the German Air Force, which was a regular feature of the German-Polish War despite Hitler's assurances that he would not bomb women and children.

We know by now that if Hitler protests that he will not do a thing, that is the very thing he intends to do. His latest promise (there have been so many that one forgets the chronological order) has been not to employ poison gas; it is therefore certain that he will do so.

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It will be interesting, in connection with recent and current events to clear up one point. It relates to the German charge of duplicity and perfidy against England. An examination of German policy towards Poland in modern times proves beyond all doubt that the Germans exercised nothing but duplicity and perfidy as the very basis of that policy. During the war they pretended to assist the Poles in their struggle against Tsarist Russia—because it suited them to create difficulties for Russia and weaken her. But as soon as an independent Poland became a probability, they placed every obstacle in the way of the Poles, whom they and their allies had so consistently exploited in the struggle against their mighty enemy.

Indeed, duplicity and perfidy is the basic principle of German foreign policy in general, and the present European tragedy is perhaps in a large measure due to the constitutional inability of the British to believe that any country should be capable of breaking its promises. That was the cause of 'Munich'—the British Prime Minister's naïve faith in Hitler's pledged word. Nor is Hitler the real originator of the present series of German perfidies. I am convinced in my own mind that that is so, because I met Hitler in 1926, in Munich, and I formed the definite judgment that he possessed a certain demagogic magnetism, but not much in the way of brains, and what he has done does require brains of a 'sort. (Incidentally, I also met Field Marshal Ludendorff, who broke promises

of a different kind from Hitler. When, at the Munich putsch, the firing began, this hero of the great war threw himself on his belly, contrary to his solemn promise to face the guns.)

Who, then, is the man behind the 'perjured liar', as Mr. Duff Cooper put it, who to-day rules Germany? The answer is—Meissner, the man behind the scenes. Meissner after the war first served under President Ebert. When the Social Democrats committed the grave blunder of electing Paul von Hindenburg to the Presidency, in the belief that his colossal military prestige would help to appease the German nationalist reactionaries, Meissner became one of his advisers and from the first exercised a sinister influence on him. Meissner was, and is, a typical representative of the traditional hypocritical German foreign policy, a policy which was bound to help Hitler into the saddle. After Hindenburg, Meissner entered the service of Hitler and he, I am convinced, is to a considerable extent responsible at least for the technique of Hitler's criminal foreign policy.

Incidentally, all who have exercised a decisive influence on German foreign policy in modern times—Meissner, Count von Schulenburg, Franz von Papen, Eulenburg, etc.—have had a false idea concerning Britain and her true relation to her Empire. They have failed to realize that Britain always combined expansion and conquest with a definite civilizing policy, was always intent on improving both the economic and cultural condi-

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tions of the native races she ruled. I have travelled a great deal in the British Colonies and possessions, and everywhere I noted a sense of security, prosperity and a gradual evolution of the civilized mentality as a characteristic accompaniment of British rule.

That, more than anything else, is the sure foundation of the British Empire, and that is why it will hold together for a long time to come, despite all the wish-thinking of her enemies for its dissolution. Germany, on the other hand, particularly since the re-creation of the 'Kaiserreich' or Empire, has always dreamt of hegemony and has even realized that dream to some extent, but has never had any idea or ideal beyond her own megalomania. Von Clausewitz once said: 'War is a continuation of policy by other means.' As Germany could never conduct her policy peacefully, she has continually resorted to the 'other means' and, next to the Kaiser, her greatest idol was the God of War.

And, of course, megalomania is the father and mother of hypocrisy, duplicity and perfidy.

## *Chapter Seven*

### POETS AND THINKERS REBEL

REVOLUTIONS WERE NOT ALWAYS MADE BY SOLDIERS; mostly they were prepared by men of thought. The revolutions that have taken place since the great war were headed by men like Lenin, Trotzky, Masaryk, Benes, Ebert, Scheidemann, and Svinhufvud, who were not soldiers, though they recognized in time the value of the trained warrior.

The Polish people have also had great revolutionary poets and thinkers who played decisive roles in the wars of independence. They have been allotted places of honour not only in the history books; their earthly remains rest with those of the great kings of Poland. In the catacombs of the Wawel, high above the city of Cracow, there are alongside the tombs of the Jagellonian and Piast Kings two sarcophagi of more recent origin. They bear the names of Adam Mickiewicz and Juljus Slowacki, a clear definition of the high esteem in which their memories are held by the Polish people.

The Wawel, a castle on a hill near the Kazimierszka, the Jewish Ghetto, dominates the city of Cracow and is the national shrine of the Polish people. It is here that relics of centuries of Polish history are preserved, while nearby, on Kościuszko Hill, the great heroes of the New Poland lie buried. Indeed, the Royal City of Cracow contains everything that has inspired, and will continue to inspire

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despite temporary defeat, the dreamers and thinkers as well as the great fighters of the Polish people.

The great poets and thinkers of Poland are buried with the great kings of Poland because when Poland lost her independence the royal sceptre came into the hands of the poets and thinkers and, indeed, their influence on the Polish people was more decisive than that of some of the princes who have left no trace, except a name and a date, in Polish history. The literary revival of the first half of the nineteenth century was not a beginning, but a continuation of the glorious cultural era that began two hundred and fifty years earlier under the last of the Jagellonian Kings and Stephan Báthory. That era, again, was preceded by a period of intellectual development which gives the historical lie to Hitler's jibe against the Poles as 'an uncultured people'.

Shortly after the time of the creation of the *Nibelunglied*, and after Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walther von der Vogelweide, Poland already had scholars of European fame and authors of note, though they wrote in Latin, and there were only hymns, Psalms, sacred legends and parables in the national tongue. Polish cultural development may have been interrupted by the many wars and revolutions, but it never ceased. The world to-day only knows about a few of the great Poles in this field—Mickiewicz, Chopin, Matejko, the great painter, Sienkiewicz, and the immortal Mme Curie—but Poland in the course of the

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centuries has produced many other poets, writers, artists, musicians and scientists who have left their mark not only on Polish culture, but also in the universal sense.

A brief review of the development of Polish culture will explain why the Poles regarded their men of letters and artists as kings.

The first Polish writers and scientists appeared in the twelfth century. They wrote, in Latin, Chronicles, historical and astrological works as well as Sermons and, in the national tongue, poems and stories of a religious character. Probably the oldest of the hymns is the *Bogurodzica*, addressed to the Holy Virgin, which is said to have originated in the year A.D. 996. The author, according to tradition, was St. Adalbert. It is more likely, however, that the *Bogurodzica* was written in the thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century Sermons were added to the treasury of literature in Polish. A great difficulty was presented by the inadequacy of the twenty-four Roman characters to render the forty-eight sounds. The establishment of the Polish Academy in the year 1400 brought a considerable advance, as both professors and students, though they all wrote in Latin, set themselves to cultivate the Polish language and evolve a Polish script.

In the fifteenth century there was already a steadily growing Polish literature, mainly of a religious character, and the need for a satisfactory script and a settled orthography became all the more pressing. In the middle of the century the

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Rector of the University of Cracow made experiments in this direction, and these were subsequently completed with success by Stanislaw Zaborowski, John Kochanowski and Lucas Górnicki. Kochanowski came of the landed nobility and studied at Cracow and Padua, but wrote in his native tongue. For a time he was a highly honoured—and remunerated—poet at the court of Sigismund Augustus. After a few years, however, he returned to his numerous family in the Black Forest. From there he wrote:

‘One’s own hearth is best, after all. I bow my knee to none, am the servant of none, and am happy in my freedom and in my secure peace. I expose not my life to the storms chasing after distant gains, nor do I oppress the poor with usury. I possess no great treasure, nor do I covet it. I am contented with my lot and plough the land which nourishes me with the oxen I inherited from my father. My food is prepared by my children and the virtuous wife who bears with me whatever fate might decree.’

How simple, and yet how expressive of a complete serenity and happiness. Later, Kochanowski lost his little daughter Ursula, and his grief inspired some poems surpassing in depth of feeling and simple beauty of expression any other lyrical works of the sixteenth century. Kochanowski, though the greatest Polish poet of that age,

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was not the only one. As early as the end of the fifteenth century there were already historical and satirical poems of considerable merit in the Polish language.

The University of Cracow was one of the foremost Universities in Europe, with a steady stream of students not only from Poland, but also from Hungary, Transylvania, Moravia, Silesia, Prussia, Pomerania and Brandenburg, and even from Bavaria, Franconia, Swabia, Saxony, Thuringia, the Tyrol and Switzerland. The classics were studied with great zeal, while the Theologians of the University played an important role not only at home but also abroad. No fewer than seventeen Professors attended the Councils of Constance and Basle, where commentaries on classical authors, and questions of grammar, style and rhetoric were dealt with. The majority of the Professors were trained at the Universities of Bologna and Padua. At the turn of the fifteenth century Mathematics and Natural History were taught by fifteen Professors, one of them being Adalbert Brudzewski, a scholar of European fame. The most brilliant student of the University, however, was Copernicus who 'halted the sun and made the earth move' and who, alone and unaided, dared to oppose himself to 'sound commonsense', as well as to the doctrines accepted for thousands of years by all humanity, and laid the foundations of a true conception of the Universe.

Naturally, German racial jealousy could not but contest the Polish claim to Copernicus as a son of

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Sebastian Grabowiecki, Stanislaw Grochowski and Johan and Matthias Rybiński, Andreas and Peter Zbylitowski, their nephew, Peter Kochanowski, and many others, who wrote lyrical, epic and dramatic works. Another of Rej's contemporaries, Simon Simonides, even introduced social problems into his poetry.

Prose literature in the Polish language was also developing apace, so that Latin literature was gradually relegated to the background. Waposki, Kromer, Modrzewski, Struś and others, still wrote their mainly scientific works in Latin, but Stanislaw Chwalczewski, though he knew Latin, as well as Hungarian and Ruthenian, wrote his Chronicles in Polish. Martin Bielski wrote his war history and Syrenski his Zoology, Botany and Mineralogy, in the national tongue. This variety of Polish literature was increased by religious and political works, the former being produced under the impulse of a religious revival preached by the Catholic Church. Peter Skarga was a brilliant preacher and writer, while Jakub produced a Polish translation of the Bible, his friends, Birkowski, Sokolowski, and Grodzicki also distinguished themselves in their various ways. The Protestant writers included Malecki, Krainiski and others. Lucas Górnicki wrote a number of very important political works. Remarkably enough, many books were published demanding the establishment of a permanent Army and the introduction of a State educational system. Other ideas which were advocated in these publications were two centuries later, after

the French Revolution, held to have been originated by the '*esprit gallois*'.

However, the Golden Age of Polish literature began under the reign of Sigismund the Elder, and continued under Sigismund Augustus, the last Jagellonian King, and under Stephan Báthory. In the seventeenth century political decline also affected the development of literature. Most of the schools were closed, poetry took a different trend, departing from its former noble levels in favour of dedicated hymns of praise, while the national tongue was allowed to be Latinized to an undue extent. The epic poems of this period that are worth mentioning were those of Wacław Potocki, written during the campaign of Chocim, and the smaller versified tales of Zimirowicz. The elegies of Drużbacka, as well as his stories and fantastic novel about the knights, written in verse, also originated at this time.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the Poles became conscious of their political decline and an effort was made to halt the process of disintegration. Attempts were made to improve the administration, a new Constitution came into being, and steps were taken to reorganize the army and bring order into the finances of the country. In the cultural field, the Piarist Stanisław Jerzy Konarski introduced reforms into the school system. However, whereas all these measures failed to stop the rot in the political sphere, they led to a tremendous intellectual revival, which was greatly assisted by the influence of French litera-

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ture, and also by the fact that the Polish throne was then occupied by Stanislaw Augustus Poniatowski, the most highly cultured man of his age. Poniatowski (1764) surrounded himself with writers, artists and scientists and even caused special coins to be struck in honour of the most prominent. Bishop Andreas Zaleski collected a library of 30,000 volumes which, in 1748, he placed at the disposal of the nation. In these circumstances Polish literature experienced a powerful new spurt, and the national tongue was cultivated and purified with great zeal.

The fall of the independent kingdom only led to an intensification of national sentiment and this trend was naturally reflected in Polish literature. The works that were produced at this time were inspired by a deep patriotic spirit. The most notable figures in this literary revival were Wacław Rzewuski, the dramatist, who was Captain of Cracow Castle (d. 1779); Franz Bohomolec, editor and dramatist (d. 1784); Stanislaw Adam Narusiewicz, Bishop of Luck, the author of many lyric poems, idylls, satirical works, tales, etc. (d. 1796); Trembicki and Wengierski, the two followers of the light Muse; Karpiński, the 'poet of the heart', whose love songs are still sung in Poland. The greatest of all, however, was Ignac Krasinski, a clergyman who was a frequent guest at the court of Poniatowski. When, in consequence of the partition, he became a Prussian subject, he practically locked himself in at his home and continued

to work there. He wrote many humorous works and was a great satirist, but excelled as a writer of fairy tales. A soldier-poet who had had a very adventurous life was Urszin Julian Miemczewicz (1758-1841). He fought under Kościuszko, was taken prisoner, managed to escape to the United States, and became an American citizen, then, after the establishment of the Grand-Duchy of Warsaw, returned home, later participating in the rising of 1830-1831. He had to flee again and died in exile at a great age. Miemczewicz wrote many poems, fables, comedies and historical dramas, and frequently figured on the play bills of the Warsaw Theatre. His comedy, *Powrót posła* (*The Deputy Returns*), was continually revived in Warsaw down to a few months ago.

The tremendous impulse of those years—under Poniatowski and immediately after the partitions—produced a great revival in every intellectual field. In addition to a vast political literature, a great deal was written on science, mathematics, law, philology and philosophy, while the drama was cultivated through the permanent theatre, which was founded in Warsaw at the proposal of Poniatowski. The preservation of the results of the revival and its extension were served by the establishment of a large number of newspapers and periodicals, some of which survive to this day.

Political misfortune only intensified the process of cultural development, for if literature had formerly constituted an important function, it

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now became an integral part of the national life and its expression towards the rest of the world. At the same time, Polish literature, though inevitably influenced by French literature, was intensely national and sprang from the very core of national consciousness. The strongest phase of the cultural and literary revival may be said to have begun in the year 1820, when a great love of the national tongue was fanned into fierce flame by the attempts of the Russians and German to suppress it. And because the attack on Polish culture was more determined in Congress Poland, the Russian part, than in the Prussian area, Congress Poland produced greater defenders.

However, it is impossible to set down an exact date—1820—as the starting point of such a great movement. Before then, Casimir Bródziński (1791–1835) had begun to collect the Polish folk songs and folk tales and he and others accomplished a great deal to pave the way for the greatest Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who was not only a man of genius, not only an exponent of the national idea and ideal to his own people, but also the mouthpiece of the nation and a determined fighter in the national cause.

Adam Mickiewicz came from an impoverished Lithuanian noble family. His Polish patriotism was not a denial of his own native land, for the union between Poland and Lithuania centuries before he was born had merged many elements in the two peoples. Mickiewicz was born in the year 1798 in Movogródek, a country town, his father

being a lawyer. He studied at Vilna University, which was saturated with the Polish national spirit and was later imprisoned for his participation in a literary movement of a Polish national character. Upon his release he was allotted domicile in a distant part of Russia. At first he lived in Moscow, then moved to Odessa, and from there to St Petersburg, after which he travelled throughout Central Russia, from the Crimea to the capital. Finally, Mickiewicz went to Germany, not to return to his homeland until the end of his life. Travelling throughout Western Europe, he met many of his most prominent contemporaries, then lived in Switzerland, and sometimes in Paris. However, he never forgot his native land and when the Turkish-Russian conflict became acute he travelled to Constantinople to form a Polish Legion. He died there on the 26th November, 1855

These are, so to speak, the external, physical data concerning the life of Adam Mickiewicz. His fierce patriotism was fanned into flame when he was exiled to Russia. The students' literary movement in Kovno, the present Lithuanian capital, of which he was a member, had been declared by the Russians to be a 'conspiracy against the State'. Some of the other members, who were found to have been 'more deeply implicated' than himself, had been sent to Siberia to die. Mickiewicz himself was kept in prison for only six months, after which he was ordered to live in a remote part of the Tsarist Empire. Exile, instead of crushing his

patriotic spirit, fired his creative genius and his romantic ballads and passionate lyrical poems even gained him an entry into Russian society. In the Crimea he was fascinated by the voluptuous beauty of the South—and also made friends with the Russian poet Pushkin and the revolutionaries Bestushev and Rylejev. At this time he began to feel as though his patriotic feeling were cooling down. The violence of his reaction is reflected in his passionately patriotic *Conrad Wallenrod*. The poem escaped the notice of the lynx-eyed Russian censor and became the song of Polish revolt.

Later, Mickiewicz succeeded in securing a passport and escaping, via the Baltic, beyond the reach of the Tsarist Government. Thereafter he lived the life of a lonely emigrant, visiting Berlin, Dresden, Prague and also Weimar, where he was kindly received by the aged Goethe. Intoxicated with the spirit of freedom, the poet now experienced a deep spiritual metamorphosis. He had been educated in a deeply religious Catholic spirit, but had, under the influence of Voltaire and his association with the Russian liberal intellectuals, slipped from grace. Now his spirit once more surrendered to Rome and the religious problem became the central factor in his spiritual life. It was in this state of mind that the news of the November Revolution reached him. By many devious journeyings he managed to arrive at the boundary of the affected territory, but by then his countrymen had once more been

crushed and were once more ruled with the 'kantchuk'.

The poet's hatred of Russia burned up within him more fiercely than ever, and on his return to Dresden he wrote the third part of his *Requiem*, a poem which according to the assessment of the literary historians did more for Poland 'than fifty army corps could have done'. For it not only branded before all the world Russian tyranny and violence, but also dealt with the ultimate problems of tormented humanity.

After the suppression of the November Revolution of 1830, Paris became the headquarters of the Polish emigration—as it is becoming to-day, in 1939. There the Polish Gospel came into being: the great literary treasures of the Polish people. There they spoke, in mystic terms, of Poland, the Christ among the nations, who must be crucified in order that other nations might be saved from violence and oppression and emerge into a glorious dawn of freedom. This idea of the vicarious suffering of the Polish people became the foundation of that Polish Messianism that has given comfort to generations of Poles, sustaining millions of Polish hearts in times of hopeless despair.

In the beehive of emigrants, where Messianism mingled with noisy and impassioned debate on practical questions, Mickiewicz was suddenly seized with a terrible nostalgia for the green hills of Lithuania which he was never to see again, and out of his homesickness and grief sprang his

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epic poem, *Lord Thaddeus*, one of the immortal works of world literature. But that was the last creation of his genius, though he was then still in the thirties. The King of Poets who had kindled the fires of patriotism and love of liberty in millions of hearts, was destitute. Sometimes he and his family were in want of bread for days. It was only after years of utter misery that Mickiewicz, a former student of Grodeck, the German philologist who had lived in Poland, was appointed to a professorate at the newly founded Academy of Lausanne. The Swiss treated him with friendliness and reverence, but Mickiewicz could not resist a call from Paris to accept the chair for Slav Literature at the College de France. He hesitated but little before he returned to the 'capital of the Slav world', where he later published his *Lectures on Slav Literature*, which was not only a great work on philosophical history but also an act of tremendous consequence for the cause which filled his life.

In 1848 the poet went to Italy in order to organize a Legion for the Polish war of independence, for even amid his professorial activities he had remained a soldier of the forgotten Army of Freedom, though he fought with a stronger weapon than the sword. In Italy he edited a paper and entered into the political struggles of the day. Then came the Crimean War, in which England and France fought on the side of Turkey against the mortal enemy of Polish freedom. The poet felt that the hour had struck and, forming a Polish

corps he took it to Constantinople. There he died from cholera, at the age of fifty-seven, without even witnessing the defeat of Russia.

But if his body was dead, his spirit survived and will survive so long as there are Poles in the world, to inspire them and make them conscious of their destiny. It is in his works that Poland's past, particularly after the rising of 1830-1831, comes alive, with all its terrible sufferings and all its heroic struggles to resist the deadly embrace of Russia. Incidentally, Stalin, whom I once had the 'honour' to interview, cannot have read or appreciated the lessons of Russian history. He, like his predecessors, has decided to incorporate the Poles, yet he ought to know that they were always a foreign body within Russia, that even the most brutal despotism the world has known could not quench their patriotic spirit, and that far from 'digesting' them, the Tsarist Empire crumbled and collapsed because of them. The same applies to Nazi Germany. The Polish nation preserved its national spirit and vitality under Tsarist despotism; it will not be otherwise under Nazi despotism.

The faith and Messianic power of Mickiewicz is expressed in the words: 'And just as with the resurrection of Christ bloody sacrifices ceased upon the earth, so with the resurrection of the Polish people war will cease throughout Christendom.' Indeed, the sufferings of the Poles have brought salvation to many oppressed peoples. There is a direct thread in history from the partitions of

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Poland, through the war of 1914-1918, to the principle of self-determination which the statesmen of Europe endeavoured to carry into effect by the Treaty of Versailles. Wherever in the world an oppressed people was fighting for freedom, from the time of the Confederation of Bar until 1848-1849, the Poles were there to help them—Pulaski and Kościuszko in America, 'Father' Bem in Hungary, Mieroslawski in Italy, and many others like them in other countries. At the time when Nationalism and Democracy walked hand in hand, Poland was the very embodiment of fiery protest against tyranny and oppression. To-day it seems as though the prophecy of Mickiewicz were going to be fulfilled. Once more Poland has been crucified and by its sacrifice roused the forces of freedom which will bring deliverance not only to her, but also to other oppressed nations.

It is a sad reflection that had Mickiewicz lived in the twentieth century, during the twenty years of Polish independence, the Poles might have been more conscious of their Messianic mission and would have meted out different treatment to the Jews of Poland, that older race that has been crucified again and again in the course of its long history. That might not have prevented the catastrophe of 1939, but it would have strengthened the faith of the Polish people in itself. However, political mistakes like the treatment of the Jews under the Republic must be ascribed to the growing pains of the new State, and do not affect the destiny

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of the Polish people, the destiny prophesied by its great poet. The spirit of Mickiewicz survives, and will continue to give sustenance and strength to the Polish people in its struggle against a nation that is dominated by the spirit of—Horst Wessel.

## Chapter Eight

### SOLDIERS OF THE PEN

ADAM MICKIEWICZ HAD MANY DISCIPLES AND followers even in his own time. Some tried to imitate him, while others blazed a new path for themselves. The latter found their inspiration in the Ukrainian wastes and founded the so-called 'Ukrainian School'. This school included Bogdan Zaleski, Anton Malczewski (1793-1826), Seweryn Goszszyński (1801-1876), Padura, and others, and Malczewski's *Marysa* and *Zamek Kaniowski* (Kaniow Castle) were two of its most significant products. However, the three great stars of Polish literature were Mickiewicz, Slowacki and Krasinski. Juljusz Slowacki was only twelve years younger than the Master, and was also educated in Vilna. He was an official at the Ministry of Finance, but lost his situation and home through the rising of 1830. His poetic genius blossomed forth during the war of independence and his *Ode to Freedom*, *Hymn to the Holy Virgin Mother* and *Song of the Lithuanian Legion* made him suddenly famous. However, the poetic and dramatic works that earned him immortality were all written abroad, in Paris, Switzerland, during his journeys in Italy and Egypt. His first book of poems was published in Paris. It contained, in addition to stories in verse, his dramas *Mindowe*, *Maria Stuart*, *Mazeppa*, *Balladyna* and others. The second volume, also published in Paris, contained lyrical poems, and part of the cycle based on the *Balladyna*. He strove in his work to strengthen

the faith of his nation in the future, but it was not his themes that made him great; he won immortality as the greatest master of the Polish language who lent a new fascination and a new meaning to the national tongue. Slowacki was also an innovator in the sense that whereas his predecessors wrote mainly about heroes, introducing women only as incidental characters, he created many feminine types, ranging from the angelic to the demoniacal. Like many another poet, Slowacki was not given the recognition he deserved in his life-time and the discovery of his greatness was left to later generations. In course of time, however, he won nation-wide fame and popularity. The difference between him and Mickiewicz lay in the fact that whereas the latter was the embodiment of the positive side of the Polish national character, Slowacki was a 'knight errant' and represented the imaginative, erratic and passionate side. Mickiewicz was above all a human being; Slowacki, above all an artist. He grew up in the shadow of the Master, the recognized Titan, who sometimes seemed to obliterate him, perhaps deliberately, because he, more than anyone else, saw Slowacki's genius. Slowacki's burning ambition to equal his great rival or even to wrest from him his dominion over the spirit of the people, assisted at the cradle of many of his best creations, adding greater power to his genius. But, though he could not equal the Titan in other things, Slowacki was the undisputed King of the word, under whose magic touch the Polish language changed into music

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and light, into bitter-sweet song like a piece by Chopin, or the refracted luminosity of mysterious and mystic whisperings, or, again, into a clarion of penetrating power. In his youth Slowacki was carried away by a spirit of combative criticism and he wielded the rapier of irony with a dangerous elegance, but later he was caught in the current of romantic mysticism that has always been irresistible to his people. The unquenchable spirit of the Polish nation is reflected in his works with indescribable power and beauty—a wonderful testimony to a cause that strives to prevail not by the power of the sword but by the force of the spirit. In that sense Slowacki's work was and is of considerable political significance, though, of course, its literary significance comes first. Slowacki died from tuberculosis when he was barely forty, but his spirit, like that of Mickiewicz, survives.

The third star, Sigismund Krasiński, was not an artist of the same calibre as the other two, but a thinker with a powerful mind. He was born in the year 1812 and came of a very distinguished family, yet all his life he was a homeless wanderer and racked by illness. He died young, and the number of his works is not great, but they are all informed by a deep wisdom and a deeper faith in the resurrection of his country, provided it freed itself of its faults and used its martyrdom to become purified in spirit. This attitude is reflected in his *Son of Shadows*, *The Dream of Caesar*, *Legend*, *Psalms of the Future*, and other works, in all of which faith, hope and love merge into

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a single noble symphony. His best work is undoubtedly *Iridion*, a dramatic poem, in which he shows that all the self-sacrificing struggles are in vain if they are impelled by hatred, for there is no salvation without love. Krasiński's *Infernal Comedy*, which he wrote at the age of twenty-one, in the year 1833, is remarkable for the fact that it deals with the *class struggle*! However, although the concept was first born in a Polish brain, the Polish people were never susceptible to such teachings and always remained incurably bourgeois, and nationalist, even during the twenty years of the Republic, when the Polish working class was exposed to so much incitement from Soviet Russia. This bourgeois and nationalist mentality saved the Republic from violent clashes and upheavals during its brief existence, though many a Polish Socialist was sent to a concentration camp.

In his *Before Dusk* which Krasiński wrote on the shore of Lake Como, he describes the ecstasy of moonlit nights beside his beloved, but sees in his own unspeakable happiness a mystic assurance of the Messianic mission and resurrection of Poland. In his introduction to this work we read the following passage:

'States are the handiwork of man, agglomerations of particles brought together. Nations, however, are made by God. That is why a State without a nation cannot and only a nation welded into a State can be Christian and belong to the universal human order.'

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This truth, added Krasiński, had never been violated in a more anti-Christian manner than by the partition of Poland. Hence, in accordance with the laws of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, there must be an awakening of the consciousness of the new epoch on this point, and Christian morality, which up till then had applied only to individuals, must be raised to be the faith of nations. In the book itself, the poet sees, rising over the mountains in the halo of the morning, the figure of the resurrected Polonia proclaiming a new golden era to all humanity.

The poets of the emigration were men of genius and during this period Polish letters attained unprecedented heights. Its greatest creations came into being in foreign lands and had to be smuggled home to a dismembered country. Yet the impression they made on the mind and spirit of the Polish people was deep and lasting.

At the same time, Polish literature also flourished in Poland itself, although Polish intellectual activity under the various despotisms was to a considerable extent confined to scientific work. The more notable cultivators of literature included Wincenty Pol, Vladyslav Syrokomla, Kornel Ujeski, Lenartowicz and other poets, and the dramatic authors Count Alexander Fredro, Magnuszewski and Romanowski. The work begun by the novelist Niemcewicz was continued by Felix Bernatowicz, Alexander Bronikowski, Joseph Ignac Kraszewski and Sigismund Milkowski. The latter also fought with distinction in the Hungarian War of Inde-

pendence of 1848. The most remarkable Polish literary figure of all was Kraszewski, who must have been the most prolific writer of all time, for he produced no fewer than 600 odd volumes, including many historical and modern novels, essays, reminiscences, etc. The Hungarian author Mauritius Jókai was in the matter of output a dwarf as compared with him, while Edgar Wallace, the greatest literary mass producer of our own age, was only a bad second, especially when it is remembered that books in those days were not produced so easily and efficiently as to-day, nor was the reading public anything like so extensive.

To mention a few less distinguished names of the Polish literary revival round the 1830's, there were the minor poets Baliński, Ańczyc, Faleński, Sowiński, Brzozowski, Norwid, etc. And all these poets and writers preached a fervent nationalism and the ideal of freedom, laying the foundations of the revolutionary movement of 1863. When that movement had been crushed, Polish literature, which until then was mainly dominated by romanticism, assumed a realistic and practical tendency. This period produced no outstanding Polish poet. The transition from romanticism to realism under an era of intensified oppression was difficult. In the 1870's, however, there arose a great poet in Adam Asnyk, who represented the transition to a neo-romanticism and raised the literature of his generation to a high level.

The period extending from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century produced some

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notable literary figures all of whom, like their predecessors, placed their genius in the service of the national cause. Prominent among them was Maria Koonopnicka (1842-1910), the celebrated poetess, and the first to apply her Muse to the exposure of social injustice. Her greatest work was *Pan Balcer*, a fine interpretation of peasant types that was held to be the equal of *Pan Thaddeus*, Mickiewicz's masterpiece. Other notable poets were Mme Treszczowska, Wysocki, Wierzbicki, Lange and others. The development of the novel and short story, particularly in Russian Poland, served the national cause by providing a substitute for all the educational and intellectual opportunities of which the Russian despotism had deprived the people. A good short story was not only an enjoyable literary product, but also a patriotic act. The Polish writers of this period were very widely read in foreign countries, most prominent among them being Eliza Orzeszkowa, Boleslav Prus and Henryk Sienkiewicz, the Nobel Prize winner.

The soldiers of the pen who contributed so much to the resurrection of Poland after the great war were supported by other great warriors of the intellect. There was Frederick Chopin, in connection with whom Schumann wrote:

'If the Tsar had known what a strong enemy he had in Chopin's mazurkas, if he had recognized in his music the "guns behind the flowers", he would have banned them.'

Chopin (1810-1849) was of pure Polish descent on the maternal side, while his father, Nicolaus, had emigrated to Poland from Nancy and was said to be the grandson of a Polish emigrant to France. Chopin interpreted and ennobled Polish folk music and gave it a new, sublime content. His music, like Mickiewicz's poetry, was worth many battalions to the Polish cause.

At the same time, Chopin was not the only great Polish composer. Polish folk music was, and is, not only characteristically Polish, a true expression of the national character and mentality, but also very old. As early as the fifteenth century there were a number of Polish composers whose names have survived to this day. In the sixteenth century the court of Sigismund Augustus at Cracow was a centre of musical culture, with a court orchestra which included Italian, German, Flemish and Hungarian musicians. Noted among the Polish composers of that period were Vaclav de Szamotul (b. 1509) and Nicolaus Gomólka (1530-1609) and also Kochanowski who wrote the music to the 'Polish Psalms'. In the seventeenth century the example of the court was followed by the 'Magnates' and Princes of the Church, all of whom set themselves to promote musical culture. There were even operas and ballets in seventeenth century Poland.

The greatest Polish composer, Chopin, was followed by Stanislaw Monuszko (1819-1872), whose opera, *Halka*, is one of the most popular pieces of Polish musical creation. Both Chopin

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and Monuszko achieved lasting world fame. A Polish musician of genius in our own day is Ignaz Paderewski, the great pianist and composer. It may be said that his mere existence has been of immense value to the Polish national cause. He entered into the political history of his country by becoming the first President of the Polish Republic. To-day he lives in retirement in Switzerland, loved and venerated by the whole world. His memoirs, which were published recently in London, reveal a great and lovable personality.

To return to the Polish poets and writers who have fought so valiantly for the cause of Poland, we must deal in some detail with two whose lives show that the work of the 'soldiers of the pen' consisted not merely in writing beautiful poems and stories.

A moving and heroic story is that of Eliza Orzeszkowa, who was barely twenty years old at the time of the rising of 1863. She lost everything, her husband having been banished to Siberia, while she herself was left to the tender mercies of the Russian police spies. But misfortune failed to quench her spirit. She continued the struggle with the means with which nature had endowed her—her genius. Her first story, *The Hungry Years*, which appeared in 1866, put new heart and courage into the Poles to stand fast until ultimate victory was achieved. Another of her works, *On the Banks of the Nyemen*, expressed an unshakable faith in the resurrection of Poland, while in *Gloria Victis* she glorified the heroic

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Poles who had fallen in the rising. She died in 1910 and did not live to see the re-birth of her country, the hope of which had been the beacon of her existence.

Another great figure of the same period was Boleslav Prus, otherwise Alexander Glowacki (1847-1912). He was a very young man when the rising of 1863 occurred. His brother Muraviev, who participated in the movement, was tortured into insanity by the Russians and he was little more than a living corpse. Prus sought forgetfulness in scientific studies. In his *Return of the Floods* he wrote about industrial workers, in *Placovka* (The Doll) he dealt with the Hungarian War of Independence, but his greatest work was *Pharao*; it carried his fame beyond the frontiers of his own country.

The name of Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916) is, of course, well known to English readers. His *Quo Vadis* was translated into every civilized tongue and brought him world fame. Many of his other novels had patriotic themes. *The Old Retainer* is a monument to loyalty; *The Lighthouse Keeper*, a glorification of patriotism and the virtue of resistance; *A Village Tragedy*, a masterly description of the poor Polish peasant groaning under the heel of Tsarist tyranny. In his other books Sienkiewicz used Polish historical themes and a series he published in 1880 roused his countrymen like the poems of Mickiewicz had done in an earlier generation.

Eliza Orzeszkowa, Prus and Sienkiewicz exercised

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an enormous influence on their contemporaries, and they had many imitators and followers. Most notable of these were Michael Balucki, Ignac Maciejowski, Johan Lan, Koloman Szaniawski and Maria Rodziewiczówna. All these, and in fact all the Polish writers of these periods, worked under the constant menace of the Tsarist tyranny. The Polish people has rewarded them by its view of authors as divinely inspired people, almost as prophets.

In the year 1887, Anton Sygietyński returned to Poland from Paris. He wrote under the influence of Zola, Ibsen and Dostoyevski and he created a realistic school. The psychological novel was represented by Artur Gruszeński, Adolf Dygas-  
iński, Josephine Sawicka and Sigismund Niedo-  
wiecki. However, the most brilliant exponent of this type of novel was a woman, Gabrielle Zapolska, who explored the depths of the human soul in her *What They Say* and *We Must Not Think of It*. Mme Zapolska also wrote plays, one of which, *Polish Blood*, carried her fame beyond the frontiers of her own country. As a boy I used to read her novels in secret, and I remember how deeply I was moved by the fate and loves of some of her characters, though I had little idea of what love was.

The realistic poets and authors preached fiery revolt against social injustice and poets like Czerwieński and Bohusz wrote Socialistic poems. Wacław Sieroszewski was sent to Siberia on account of his poems, and it was there that, in

his subsequent works, he described the state and attitude of mind of the exiled Poles, proving that centuries of oppression and persecution had failed to affect their national thoughts and emotions. Ladislav Stanislaw Reymont (1868-1925) was a highly individual author of the realistic school and won the Nobel Prize for Literature with his *Land of Promise*.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century the literary movement of the 'Young Poles' was started in Cracow, and produced a number of talented poets, like Kasprowicz, Denbicki (1871-1931), Szczepański, Adamowicz, Mirandolla, Mićński and others. Kasprowicz became the greatest poet of his age, while Przybyszewski achieved success as a novelist and Wyspianski as a dramatist. A great novelist member of the movement was Stefan Zeronski, whom his countrymen compare with the Nobel Prize winner Reymont, and many regard him as even greater.

The names of the Polish poets, novelists, dramatists and sociologists who have placed their talents and energies into the service of Polish literature and the Polish national cause at the turn of the century and since is legion and it would be impossible even to mention them all, and we will therefore only deal with a few typical figures, not entirely on the principle of merit, but rather on the basis of the characteristically Polish way in which their talent first found expression. A striking case is that of Ferdinand

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Goetel (b. 1890) who was originally an architect. At the beginning of the Great War he happened to be in Warsaw and was arrested by the Russians as an Austrian subject. After months of imprisonment he was sent to Turkestan. In 1920, after many terrible adventures, he succeeded in escaping to Persia, reaching his native country through India, with British help. He began his literary career with a book describing his adventures.

Mme Sophie Szczucka-Kossak was the wife of a landowner in the Ukraine and experienced all the horrors of the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent period before she was able to escape. By her vivid description of her experiences in her book *Conflagration* she rose at one bound to the front rank of Polish authors. She scored still greater successes with her subsequent historical novels. Anton Ferdinand Ossendowski is another post-war author who began with a book on his flight from Siberia, which was then followed by others.

This survey of Polish literature through the centuries is necessarily brief and inadequate, yet sufficient to show that Poland's 'soldiers of the pen' have always fought for their country with the same tenacity, the same dauntless courage as her soldiers in the field, and if the national spirit of the Polish people is unquenchable to-day, as it has been through centuries of savage oppression, it is in no small measure due to the poets, authors and dramatists who wrote 'with pens dipped in their heart's blood'. It is only natural that Poland's

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'soldiers of the pen', included and include many women, who have fought side by side with the men, just as they have fought in the field during all the wars of independence, during the Great War, and during the glorious defence of Warsaw in 1939. The Polish language and Polish literature will be banned again, but all the might of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia must fail against the mighty spirit of the Polish people.

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themselves into the service of their country. While the rebellion lasted they worked and not infrequently actually fought side by side with the men. Later they kept the spirit of patriotism alive in their own homes and their children grew up in atmosphere where passionate love of country and self-sacrifice for the sacred cause of independence were taken for granted.

When, with the aid of Napoleon, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was established, the Polish Legions abroad could not return to their native land, for the simple reason that the great majority of their members had long fallen on foreign battlefields. Hardly had the organization of the Grand Duchy been completed when Napoleon began his fateful march to Moscow. The grateful Polish nation raised an army of more than 100,000 men to accompany the Emperor. Practically the whole of it was lost, but its remnants remained loyal to Napoleon and one Polish noble, Prince Joseph Poniatowski, even brought a further 16,000 men to his aid. After the Battle of Leipzig only 20,000 men of the great Polish army were able to return home.

These heavy losses in men, which were naturally accompanied by a corresponding loss of treasure, could not fail to affect the position of the Polish woman, nor were they able to relax their patriotic efforts, for although the question of Poland was dealt with at the Congress of Vienna, in 1815, the independence of the country was not restored. Fifteen years later the so-called Kingdom of

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Congress Poland, the part of Poland attached to Russia, was once more obliged to take up arms in defence of its rights. And once more the attempt ended in disaster, with the loss of 80,000 Polish lives, apart from a further 20,000 who fled the country after the Polish defeat.

The struggle of 1830-1831 demanded tremendous sacrifices from the women of Poland. At the approach of the enemy they left their homes and not only helped in erecting defence works, organizing hospital services and performing other non-combatant tasks, but many of them also distinguished themselves in the field.

The Polish historical records contain countless stories of feminine heroism in this war for freedom. Here is an album of portraits, more than a century old. It contains one of the young Countess Emilia Platxer, a wonderfully pretty girl with a slim figure and a straight, self-assured look. She is wearing the uniform of a captain of Hussars, with her small but firm left hand resting on the hilt of her sword. Glancing at this picture anyone unacquainted with the truth would immediately think of fancy dress. Yet this charming young woman was a military leader of great resource and reckless courage, the terror of the Cossack warriors sent by the Tsar to crush her country. She was known, and feared, as the 'Girl Captain', and participated heroically in many violent battles. She came out of them all unhurt. What killed her was not a physical wound, but the collapse of the rising, which she could not survive.

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Sobanski, Oginski and others. Nor were these scores of women of the nobility and the upper middle class unaware of the fact that if their activities were discovered by the Russian Secret Police, they would all be sent to Siberia, to a fate far worse than death. They knew that few of the tens of thousands of Poles who had been banished to those snowy wastes had returned and hardly any had ever been pardoned; there was no mercy for the Poles. Yet this knowledge did not deter them. Indeed the legion of heroic women was steadily increasing and by their reckless daring they established an immortal tradition which later generations of Polish women, in the various wars of independence, followed with equal intrepidity.

However, all this did not exhaust the women's contribution to vital national service. The organization of financial and other aid to the dependants of soldiers in the field was taken in hand by them as a matter of course. But over and above that, they also charged themselves with the education of the younger generation. The Slav peoples, the Poles as well as the Russians, Czechs, etc., have always guarded their language and cultural assets with jealous care, more so than any other race. Now, and for many decades to come, the Russian oppressors of the Polish people forbade the teaching of Polish in the schools under pain of the direst penalties.

The patriotic women of Poland undertook the task of giving the children a Polish education.

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The need was particularly urgent in Lithuania, which the Congress of Vienna had attached directly to Russia, and not as part of the Polish Kingdom. After the crushing of the rebellion of 1830-1831, the Polish language and Polish education were banned in this territory, which the Russians regarded as Russian. The patriotic Polish women of the educated classes defied the ban and, at the risk of long terms of imprisonment and other Draconian punishments, held secret Polish classes for the children. This underground system of education was gradually extended to other areas, and the women left nothing undone to preserve and cultivate the Polish language and Polish culture.

Nor were these comprehensive activities of the Polish women confined to any particular period. They worked unremittingly for decade after decade, unsparing with their time, money and energy, and undaunted by incarceration and other forms of persecution.

Thus they played a decisive part in preparing the ground for the events of the year 1863, when the Polish people again rebelled against their brutal oppressors and again engaged in a life and death struggle with the Russian autocracy. The women of Poland naturally participated in the conflict itself; but it was they who rendered the explosion possible, not only by their educational work in the secret schools, but also by fostering the national spirit in the Polish masses, forming secret groups and societies for the purpose. The

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their men, in most cases without any pay; to them this was not a method of earning their living, but a contribution to the struggle for the freedom of their country.

In the rising of 1863 a large number of women served in the field. They were distributed among six different battalions. Henriette Pustowojt was one of the women who covered herself with glory by her deeds of valour, which had been immortalized in Polish military and folk songs. The majority of these women were, of course, employed in the intelligence service, for liaison between the individual armies and to spy out the strength and disposition of the enemy troops. The following passage is quoted from the diary of a male soldier in this war of liberation:

‘The women in our battalions undertook and executed even the most dangerous tasks. They have frequently risked their lives, volunteering for the most impossible feats and in most cases succeeding.’

The official organ of the Russian War Ministry, the *Russkij Invalid*, frankly admitted that the rebellion was lasting so long only because the Polish women had a considerable part in it. ‘In the most critical moments’, wrote the Russian paper, ‘the women found clever solutions and plans, which were realized by the men.’

However, despite the Poles’ terrific efforts, the rising could not succeed. It was started prematurely and in most unfavourable circumstances.

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No fewer than 10,000 Poles lost their lives before the attempt was crushed.

Thereafter the same methods of ruthless oppression and Russification were employed in Congress Poland as after 1831 in the territories not included in the Kingdom. In consequence, the Russian prisons were crowded and the special courts were in permanent session. The special courts sent countless Poles to Siberia to rot and die. But even the men who were left nominally at liberty could not move freely under the police dictatorship that had been introduced, and the women were in no better case. As part of the oppressive measures all the Polish schools were closed and all the Roman Catholic monasteries were handed over to the Greek Orthodox, i.e. Russian Church. The vacant livings in the Roman Catholic parishes could not be filled, nor did the Russians tolerate any Poles in government and municipal offices. For, of course, the priest from the pulpit, as well as the official from his desk, had worked to foster the ideal of Polish independence and had contributed to the preparation of the rebellion.

By now the women of Poland had seventy years of devoted patriotic service behind them and were only strengthened in their resolve to do their share. They regarded it as their prime duty to lighten the lot of the patriots who were languishing in prison and to bring aid to their dependants. Throughout, they continued unremittingly to propagate the national ideal by every possible means. It was no accident but a logical develop-

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ment that the nationalistic literary trend was led by a woman, the authoress Eliza Orzeszkowa. Boleslaw Prus and Henryk Sienkiewicz, who later achieved international fame as the author of *Quo Vadis?*, followed in her footsteps.

Another woman, Hedwig Luszczevska, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Deotyma', started a *salon* in Warsaw to foster the national spirit both in life and literature, and Polish literature began to bear the impress of passionate patriotism. Hedwig was the daughter of a General who had earned distinction in the service of the Tsar, and this fact gave her a certain advantage. But the Tsarist police and the army of spies they maintained were on the alert and a time came when the leader of the patriotic *salon* was obliged to employ the cunning strategy which decades of oppression had taught her race. In order to allay the rising suspicion of the Russian authorities, Hedwig one day invited the Governor of the city to attend a gathering at her house. News of the invitation caused great bitterness among some of her compatriots, owing to an obvious misinterpretation. However, the Governor came, listened to one or two French *chansons*, a performance on the piano and the recital of a few sentimental poems, and deciding that these gatherings were only for harmless entertainment ceased to keep them under observation. Actually, Hedwig Luszczevska's *salon* was not only an intensely nationalistic literary centre from which impassioned patriotic poetry was radiated to the masses, but also the head-

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quarters of a conspiracy where determined men and women were hammering out plans to throw off the Russian yoke.

Other women of the educated classes served the cause of Polish literature with equal zeal and, at the same time, constituted the shock troops in the fight against Russification. This movement began in the period after the year 1831, when it became the principal concern of the women of Poland to teach the rising generation not only how to be good mothers, but how to be good Polish mothers, which meant that motherhood itself must be a patriotic function. Accordingly, the young ladies of well-to-do families who had been educated abroad returned to their homeland not to indulge in a round of pleasures prior to marriage, but to organize secret Polish schools and private institutions everywhere, even in the remotest villages, where they taught the Polish children in their native language, instilling into them the ardent patriotism which a foreign sojourn had only fanned into a stronger flame in themselves. That was the position, in particular, after the rising of 1863, when young women were systematically trained as elementary schoolteachers. That was one reason why they went abroad in their hundreds, mostly to France, where the atmosphere of Liberty and Equality was most congenial to their purpose. Besides their training, they also brought back with them new ideas which they propagated despite the ridicule of some of their compatriots. But ridicule represented the least of their difficulties.

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Their Polish educational work frequently involved the sacrifice of their health and even their lives, for many of these women were sent to Siberia. In Warsaw, as well as in Congress Poland as a whole, the Russian authorities maintained a vast organization to watch these activities, so that Polish education claimed countless victims. However, the very vastness of this organization presented many opportunities for its own destruction, for the ill-paid officials were susceptible to bribery and the Polish patriots were in this way able to secure a relaxation of their vigilance. At the same time, this did not lighten to any considerable extent the self-imposed burden of the Polish women who had made themselves responsible for the education of the people.

How heavy this burden was, and how valiantly it was borne, may be gauged from the fact that the Russian Government had not only forbidden the teaching of Polish in Polish schools, but had also failed to provide even Russian schools. Their idea was to eradicate the Polish language and Polish culture entirely, and the few purely Russian elementary schools in Poland were so bad that when the children—after six or seven years!—left them, they were unable to write in Russian. The continuance of the existing Polish schools was made dependent by the Russian authorities on the exclusion of the Polish language, and were therefore mostly closed down by the Poles. The law imposing compulsory primary education, which had been introduced by a former Polish govern-

ment, was expressly abolished by the Russians. In addition to the political enslavement of the Polish people, they wanted to encompass their cultural subjection. Any public effort on the part of the Poles to educate their children was frustrated by the fact that all Polish schools were placed under the strict supervision of Russian school inspectors to see that the language of instruction was Russian.

That was the situation with which the women of Poland had to contend. It was due to their self-sacrificing patriotism that the Russian tyranny failed in its purpose of crushing the Polish national spirit and extirpating Polish culture. Everywhere the women and girls maintained their secret schools, gradually evolving an organized system of education, which also involved the continual outwitting of the Russian authorities. By the year 1894 the long experience of underground instruction had crystallized in a normal educational system, with a regular Polish supervising authority and proper examinations.

In view of the foregoing, it is not surprising to learn that the prime mover of this national organization was a woman, Cecilia Sniegocka, who at first found herself opposed by her own people, but ultimately succeeded in her purpose. The objection to her plan was that a nation-wide organization, in contrast with individual secret schools, would be bound to arouse the suspicion of the Russian authorities and ultimately lead to the incarceration of all concerned in it. However, despite such attempts to sabotage her plan, Mme

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Sniegocka went on with the creation of a strong, well-knit organization, winning the support of such prominent people as Cecilia Walewska, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Mauritius Zamoyski and Count Adam Krasinski.

The scheme was successful from the first. In Warsaw alone, in the course of a twelvemonth, 250 children were collected whose parents were prepared to risk imprisonment and even death, and in time their number grew to 2,000. Registrations took place at the house of Mme Sniegocka, where the would-be scholars were also examined for grading purposes. It was here, too, that they were taught how to conceal their schoolbooks and copy books and how to arrive at the various places of instruction. This was all the more difficult because 'school' was each day in a different building and at a different hour. Each day the parents received a note giving an address for the following day. This note was not to be shown to anyone else, and its loss would have been regarded as a calamity. The unfortunate children were forbidden to appear in the street in groups, and had to know the route to each day's new address; to inquire the way of a stranger would have been dangerous. The documents relating to the scholars were carefully hidden, frequently in the home of the caretaker of the block of flats or tenement concerned. These caretakers were in the pay of the Russian police, but the great majority of them, far from spying on their compatriots as directed, were loyal to the national cause and misled their Russian masters.

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They could be trusted with school registers and other incriminating documents.

The classes were held mostly in working class homes, as the organizers could be sure of the implacable hatred of the Polish working classes for the Russians. Each class consisted of not more than 20 children, but, as might be imagined, the available space was in most cases inadequate even for such small groups. However, the air of conspiracy that surrounded their education only added to the children's zeal in absorbing knowledge. The women teachers, in addition to the dangerous nature of their task, had to contend with other difficulties, such as the lack of schoolbooks, but nothing could damp their enthusiasm. The curriculum included religion, Polish language and history, geography, arithmetic, natural history and also Russian, a knowledge of which was necessary in daily life. The teachers taught with the inspiration of crusaders, while the children absorbed their teaching with a deep sense of its importance. The 'hosts' of the schools were paid a small rent; the majority of the teachers gave their services free, while a few of them received a salary of from ten to fifteen roubles per month.

The need for secrecy was impressed not only on the children, but also on the parents. The least mistake, the least imprudence, might have led to the disruption of the whole organization and to mass arrests of the organizers. Indeed, those involved in the conspiracy kept a watch on the Russian police and any suspicious move on the

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part of the Russian sleuths was countered with stricter secrecy or dealt with by means of bribery. The organization operated illegally for twelve years, during which time there was not a single case of denunciation. In Warsaw the scheme cost 6,000 roubles per annum, contributed partly by parents and partly by members of the organization. Later, substantial donations were made by Sienkiewicz and Anton Osuchowsky. In the country, the education of the children was in the hands of the big landowners, who, unless there was a trained teacher or other suitable person in the family, ran the secret schools themselves.

Helena Boguszevska, the authoress, records her own experiences as a pupil of one of the secret schools in Warsaw. She refers to the special difficulty of the girls, who had to hide their books and slates under their pinafores. The children were carefully trained not to 'blab'. They were taught not to hurry in the street, and not to recognize their teachers in public. They had to enter and leave the 'school building' one by one, taking care that there was no policeman within sight. Some policemen, of course, were bribed to turn a blind eye to these goings-on. The classes were held in the dining or living room, and always there was a cupboard crammed with needlework, begun but never completed, so that in case of a sudden raid by the Russian police it could be pretended that the girls had gathered to do their embroidery in company. The children derived a great deal of fun from the conspiratorial character of their

schooling, but were not unaware of the seriousness of the matter. At every noise in the staircase or landing they had to maintain a dead silence, holding their breaths and listening, listening. Thus, from early youth, the children were sworn enemies of the Russian Empire. A dozen or so of the secret school in Warsaw were discovered, their 'hosts' and teachers imprisoned, but the organization as a whole was never affected. In the provinces the girls' schools were disguised as dressmaking establishments and the boys' schools as workshops. The organization extended as far East as Kiev, fostering the national spirit everywhere in defiance of every danger.

## *Chapter Ten*

### THE FIFTH COLUMN

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA PROPER following upon the Russo-Japanese war presented an opportunity to the Poles which they were not slow to seize. Secondary and higher education was only possible to Polish youth in Russian institutions; the Polish secret organization did not extend beyond elementary education. On 28th January 1905, after many secret meetings and consultations, the Polish academic youth of both sexes decided to strike. In all secondary and high schools the boys and girls, at an agreed signal, rose to their feet, right in the middle of a lesson, and cried in unison: 'We want Polish schools!' And with that they trooped out of the classroom. A similar scene was enacted in all the schools of these grades and soon they were all empty.

The Russian authorities replied by expelling the Polish students and closing down the schools. However, this state of affairs could not continue for long, as the schools were also attended by Russian and Jewish students. The authorities therefore resorted to intimidation, and succeeded in terrorizing some parents into exercising their authority over their children and ordering them to resume attendances. However, the majority of parents sided with the young strikers and decided to await developments. 'Blacklegging', in turn, ended in consequence of two tragic incidents. Two of the students, torn between filial

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duty and their own feelings, as well as the public opinion of practically the whole of Polish youth, committed suicide. The intimidated parents were now afraid to be afraid, so that the strike was complete, and arrangements began to be made for secret secondary education as well. During the following months all the young people who could afford to do so either emigrated abroad or transferred to the interior of Russia, in order to be able to finish their education. In particular, the Universities of Cracow and Lemberg were crowded with students from the Russian-occupied parts of Poland, so that the Russian high schools in those parts were empty. The discomfiture of the Russian authorities was complete.

In the end the Russian Government agreed to consider the matter and subsequently adopted the plan of Prince Imeretynski, submitted by him eight years earlier. The Prince argued, reasonably enough from the Russian point of view, that neglect of Polish language instruction was presenting subversive elements with an opportunity to teach outside the schools not only Polish but also rebellion. He also pointed out that the Polish students studying at foreign Universities were returning to Poland as agitators and were propagating the foreign mode of life. He therefore proposed that, in order to take the wind out of the sails of these elements, the Polish language should be taught in the State schools with the utmost efficiency.

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Imeretynski's proposal was now carried into effect and by a Tsarist Ukase of October, 1905, even extended to include the establishment of Polish private elementary and secondary schools. In the last analysis this was a triumph for the women of Poland, without whose previous work the historic school strike would probably not have taken place. Also, but for the fact that they had an operative elementary educational organization ready, the Russian concession would not have been of immediate benefit to the Polish national cause. As it was, the establishment of the elementary school system was only a matter of converting the illegal schools into legal ones. However, the spirit of these schools did not change; the ultimate aim continued to be the reconquest of national independence.

It would be unjust to minimize the services of the men in this struggle. At the same time, it must be admitted that the women played a far more important role in preserving the Polish language and Polish culture. It was the selfless devotion with which they sacrificed their substance, their domestic happiness and even their freedom and health, and the indomitable courage and tenacity with which they carried on the campaign for decades, that rendered possible the preservation and development of these greatest treasures of the Polish nation. As already indicated, none of these Polish heroines cared for personal reward or recognition, and few of their names are on record. One of the few, and typical of the generality of

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her sisters, was Mme Josephine Tuhanowska, who spent the whole of her substantial fortune in founding schools and scientific laboratories.

As regards the passive resistance of the Polish women, it is sufficient to mention that no Polish woman would dance with a Russian, Prussian or Austrian officer, let alone marry a man of any of these nationalities, despite the fact that the manhood of Poland had been tragically reduced through the repeated risings and wars. It was the hatred of Russia and Prussia that led to the close attachment of the Polish people to the Roman Church which still persists; they wanted to differ even in their religion from the Greek Orthodox Russians and the Protestant Prussians.

The men of Poland traditionally hold their women in the highest esteem and are selflessly devoted to them. They express their admiration of the 'weaker sex' by respectfully kissing the hand of every woman by way of salutation or thanks. A foreigner visiting Poland who is introduced to a lady and omits to kiss her hand, is regarded as a boor, as a person lacking in elementary manners. If we remember the heroism of these women, or at least of their mothers and grandmothers, the universality of this gallant tribute on the part of the men is easy to understand.

However, the Russo-Japanese war, which represented a turning point in the history of the Polish women, also brought to the foreground a great man who was later to become the creator of the New Poland. Joseph Pilsudski, who was

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then already playing a leading role in the Polish Labour movements, had come to the conclusion that Polish independence could only be achieved by Poland herself, and that no other country would secure it for her. He therefore formed rifle clubs, as centres of military training, and began to gather round him his General Staff for the coming war of liberation. He and his associates all foresaw the Great War, the approach of which was loudly proclaimed by Vladyslav Studnicki and others, and their preparations were made accordingly.

Almost simultaneously with their men, the women of Poland also began to prepare. As early as the year 1910 they organized themselves into rifle clubs, despite the initial opposition of the men, who resented their attempt to play at soldiers and placed many obstacles in their way. The patriotic ardour of the women, their passionate desire to help in regaining the independence of their country, enabled them to overcome these and other obstacles; they fought for the right to work and fight for the Fatherland, for the opportunity to place the high qualities which they had inherited from past generations of Polish women in the service of Poland.

At first these women's organizations were confined to women of the educated classes, University students, school-teachers, office girls and the like. The first detachments were formed in Cracow and Lwow, with forty and sixty-four members respectively, only the most reliable women being

admitted for a probation period, to be followed by definite membership. The new member had to swear a solemn oath binding her till the day of her death or till the achievement of Polish independence, the oath being administered in front of a pair of burning candles and a naked sword. In the course of the next two years fifteen further women's detachments were formed in Wieliczka, Przemyśl, Stanisław, Kolomea, Sanok and other Galician towns. A year later, in 1913, these organizations were opened to Polish women from Congress Poland and Prussian Poland, who faithfully spent their summer vacation in training.

In no single case did a member of the women's detachments break her oath. Many parents attempted to prevent their daughters from carrying out their undertaking, but they invariably failed; if there was no other way out the girls concerned ran away from home to present themselves at their allotted posts.

The women's organizations had many subdivisions and, on the whole, constituted a military academy, at which the members were instructed and trained in the roles which they were destined to play in the coming war and in the new phase of the struggle for independence which was to begin simultaneously. The instructors were Polish regular officers of the Austro-Hungarian Army, either on the active or the retired list. Anticipating a short war, the leaders of the feminine military academies concentrated mainly on the intelligence, liaison, and medical services, but the members

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were also initiated into the use of the various arms, the organization and distribution of the Russian Army, and the organization of the military supply services, and were also instructed in topography, the composition and action of explosives, guerilla warfare and tactics, signalling and the communication services in the field.

In Cracow some of the women were permanently employed in the Austro-Hungarian arsenal and were therefore able to glean much valuable information. The women's organization also devoted close attention to the literature of war. The Service Regulations of various armies were obtained, and the most important parts translated into Polish. The German military publications were carefully studied, and so were the military aspects of the Polish risings of the past. The women's detachments collected a whole library of military works.

The individual members were trained as non-commissioned officers and officers and they, in turn, trained others, or became teachers in the various military subjects. In the year 1913 Pilsudski himself lectured to some detachments of women on revolutionary strategy, while Sosnowski, who later became Polish Minister for War, lectured on theoretical strategy. Pilsudski followed the training of both men and women with close attention and was ubiquitous at this time. When he spoke, he spoke briefly and to the point. For example, at one national festival he said: 'The great deeds of our ancestors are only worth while and must only be celebrated if they lead to further great

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deeds.' In fact, the men and women he was addressing were ready to face certain death at a word of command.

Naturally, training was not confined to book learning and lectures, even in the case of the women. Theoretical instruction was usually followed by drill and rifle practice. At an advanced stage in the training the male and female detachments went away for joint field exercises lasting several days, which included long route marches with periods of rest on hard ground and first aid for the 'wounded'. The commissariat was, of course, in the hands of the women.

In Austria these exercises were carried on by the Polish detachments openly, as the Austrian Government anticipated useful help from them in case of war, and not only permitted their activities but gave them all possible assistance. In Warsaw, on the other hand, the preparations of the Polish revolutionaries were carried on in the strictest secrecy and they had to content themselves with theoretical instruction; even notes and documents could not be made freely. Nevertheless, the Polish amazons were able to perform many vital tasks. For example, one girl student was instructed, on her return to her home in Plock, to spy out the local garrison's commissariat, including plans of buildings, quantity of stores and even character sketches of the leading officers, and she accomplished all this with the greatest efficiency. In course of time the courses of instruction were extended to include the preparation of articles

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of clothing specially designed to conceal notes, forbidden pamphlets and even explosives. Naturally, the women were also taught to code and de-code messages.

Propaganda was an essential part of the Polish amazons' secret work. Recruiting members of both sexes, and collecting contributions towards the Polish War Chest, came under this head. The Amazons of Freedom performed all these tasks voluntarily, without any sort of compulsion or pressure, neglecting their own personal pursuits. Students gave up their studies, while other women incurred heavy financial loss by abandoning, wholly or partly, their professional work. But none cared. They all regarded it as a privilege and an honour to serve the cause of Polish independence. They were expecting the Great War and preparing for it with all their might, while Europe was dozing in the sun, to wake with a violent start at the sound of the revolver shots in Sarajevo.

## Chapter Eleven

### THE GREAT WAR

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN JULY, 1914, FOUND THE Poles in the state of preparedness indicated above. Pilsudski realized that this was the sound of the legendary Golden Horn of Wernihora calling the Poles to battle. He led the youth of Poland into the field against Russia, the arch enemy of the Poles who had stolen the largest slice of Polish soil and shed most Polish blood. The hour had struck to give vent to the hatred of a century for the 'Little Mother', who had been everything but that to the Poles.

The women were as ready for the call as the men. The trained members of their detachments called meetings in Cracow and Lwow and new members offered themselves in overwhelming numbers. The women took charge of the commissariat and the administration of the Defence Fund, contributions to which were now pouring in at a tremendous rate. Both the male and female membership of the Polish forces increased to such an extent that the Austrian military authorities were obliged to place separate barracks and supplies of arms at their disposal. The training of the new recruits proceeded at high pressure and the amazons of all social classes at this initial phase did their share by feeding the troops. None cared about rank or status; every woman was an *obywatelka* or 'citizeness', and the young countess peeled potatoes with the same passionate devotion as the working woman. They were all

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soldiers of liberty and carried out the orders of their leaders, male and female, whatever they were.

A principal centre of these activities was the city of Lwow or Lemberg. At the approach of the enemy the women transferred all stores and supplies to Cracow, and later they joined the various services to which they were allocated.

However, this warlike enthusiasm was by no means confined to the Polish men and women who happened to be at home; those who were abroad at the outbreak of war were equally eager. All of them received their mobilization papers, thanks, again, to the devoted, and sometimes daring work of the women. For example, a Mme Sophie Borula-Janiszewska travelled all over Belgium, including the parts under German occupation, sought out all the young Poles there, informing them of the mobilization of the Polish forces. In the German-occupied areas she used identity papers given her by the Austrian Consulate in response to a telegram from Cracow, while in the areas still in the hands of the Allies she moved about with the aid of her Russian passport. She travelled to Warsaw to report to headquarters via Holland, England, Norway, Sweden and Petrograd.

Nelli Grzedsinska carried out a similar mission in France and England, then, under a false name, she hurried via Berlin to Cracow to take further instructions, as a result of which she travelled to Italy and paid a further visit to England. In

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Zürich the Polish women living there established a transit centre, from which they sent home eighty men of military age, some of whom were not merely reminded of their patriotic duty but actually recruited for the cause by the women.

In the autumn of 1914 Pilsudski amalgamated the 'rifle clubs' into a unified military organization, under unified control. He called it Polska Organizacja Wojskowa, or P.O.W. and its functions, in addition to actual military measures, were to organize Polish society and maintain an intelligence and sabotage service behind the Russian lines. Actually, that was where the P.O.W. operated, in Russian Poland.

The couriers of the organization included many women, and their tasks included not only the conveying of information, but also the blowing up of bridges of strategic importance and arsenals. In addition, all the members of the organization had to be provided with passports and identity papers, in order to enable them to move in Russian-controlled territory. A great deal could be done with money in all other directions, but the problem of identity documents during the war was a very difficult one, for even the corrupt Russian officials dared not risk coming into conflict with the military authorities. In peace-time Russia the citizen was made up of three things—body, soul and passport. The P.O.W. during the war established 'passport bureaux', where genuine passports, taken, among others, from dead or wounded

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Russians soldiers, were 'washed' and altered. In time, the Russian authorities were obliged to print passports on special paper which assumed all the colours of the rainbow under this treatment, and they also used special seals. Thereupon the Poles began to manufacture the passports themselves. For example, of 800 passports forged by the Poles in Warsaw not a single one was questioned by the Russians. Here again, it was the women who did the greater part of the work.

The women also played an overwhelmingly important role in the organization and running of a secret postal service. After the German occupation of Warsaw the Germans made communication between the city and the rest of the country as difficult as possible and prohibited correspondence between the parts of Poland controlled by them and the Austrian-controlled parts. It was the women and in particular Mme Maria Richter, who proposed the establishment of a separate Polish postal service. The women acted as postmasters, sorters and postmen, dealing with correspondence directed both ways, and also to and from the front. In some villages they had regular post offices, the charge per letter being ten kopeks. During the few months before the re-establishment of a regular postal service the women delivered some 4,000 letters in the Austrian-occupied territories, and nearly twice as many in Warsaw. Naturally, this postal service also dealt with prohibited propaganda material. The Germans

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closed down some of the 'post offices', arrested and interned some of the women, but the illegal postal service went on as long as it was necessary.

The preparation of Polish propaganda material and its dissemination was almost entirely in the hands of the women. As Pilsudski himself said, three quarters of the work that brought about the national awakening had been performed by the women. That was their reward, and the women of Poland were proud of it. Naturally, Alexandra Pilsudski, the leader's wife, took a leading part in all these activities, and her writings give a striking insight into the heroic life of the Polish amazons of those days.

The female members of the P.O.W. who served as nurses in the Russian war hospitals obtained valuable military information by making friends with their charges and learning from them about Russian troop movements. They travelled to Warsaw on leave, or for medical and other supplies, and therefore had ample opportunities to deliver written reports to the right quarter. In Warsaw members of the organization, always including a high proportion of women, exercised both ingenuity and courage in the handling of dangerous documents and arms and munitions. Documents were never kept at the homes of members, but were hidden in schools and other public buildings.

However, arms and munitions had to be kept in members' homes and the following incident, one of the few recorded in writing, is typical of

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the calculated cunning with which the women outwitted the Russians in dangerous moments.

Hedwig Makowska, a young girl, one day learned that police spies had been observed near the house in which her friend and fellow member Helen Strzelecka was living; there was a quantity of explosives hidden in Helen's fourth floor flat. Hedwig went in search of her friend and together they hastened to the latter's flat. In the doorway, in the caretaker's cage, they saw a man studying the list of the inhabitants of the building, while another man stood watch. The two girls ran up to Helen's flat and hurriedly collecting the explosives descended the stairs, chatting and laughing. On the first floor they met a group of Russian gendarmes who were on their way up to the flat. They politely stood aside to let the two young ladies pass.

Another interesting incident demonstrates the cool courage and presence of mind of the Polish amazons. The 'Urania', a Polish institute of popular education, was being searched by Russian police. The searchers were in the inner rooms, while the girls on duty in the outer office sat motionless at their desks, under strict guard. The desk of one girl was laden with prohibited pamphlets which the searchers would have been sure to discover later. Fortunately, someone came in and asked for a copy of a certain picture for reproduction purposes. The young lady in question obtained permission to get it from another room, which had already been searched. Picking up a

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bundle of the dangerous pamphlets the young lady hurried out, then, under some pretext, she returned and removed all the rest.

Mme Anna Krynska knew herself to be in mortal danger when her servant girl came in to inform her that there were some Russian soldiers inquiring for her, for she had revolvers and reports intended for headquarters hidden in her flat. But she did not lose her head. Placing everything into a pair of shopping bags, she and the girl calmly walked out of the building. That night the police came, but found nothing. The girl was arrested, but later released for lack of proof.

The number of such cases was legion, and the women were rarely caught. Nor did they recoil from participating in the work of tracking down and 'liquidating' informers, though, naturally, no detailed instances are recorded.

One of the most dangerous places for the Polish organization was Lublin, which was a Russian supply centre and the counter-espionage was particularly strong. Accordingly, the proportion of Polish losses was high. Many of the victims were women. Mme Maria Optolowicz was one of those who died in a Russian prison. There were many narrow escapes, too, as when a group of Poles dynamited a Russian train and one of them was severely injured. The helpless man was carried by his comrades to a nearby vicarage, then transported to the home of a woman member of the Polish organization and from there, disguised as

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an old woman, to yet another hiding place. This was accomplished despite the fact that Lublin was now crowded with detectives from Warsaw, who had come specially to discover the perpetrators of the crime.

Many women couriers, trudging over snow and ice with important messages, lost their way and strayed into homesteads occupied by Russian soldiers. In all cases where the messages were found on them they were tortured to reveal the names of other members of the organization or other information. But they never succumbed and went to their deaths calmly.

The activities of the women in the P.O.W. continued and extended throughout the war. The German occupation of Russian Poland brought them little relief. The Russians tried to repress the Polish movement for independence with blood and iron, and they seemed to take a special delight in throwing educated Polish women into prison among prostitutes and the like. The Germans, having benefited by the aid of the Poles, found their ambition for national independence inconvenient and interned or jailed a great many members of the P.O.W., including women. They established internment camps at Holzminden, Hammer Laon, and elsewhere, and kept the Polish women there, with French, Belgian and British prisoners. In Austria many Poles were jailed for 'insulting the Emperor' or other 'offences'. Moreover, the Germans frequently forced educated Polish women to perform the

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heaviest tasks on the land. The arrests were carried out in the country places as well as in the towns. In Plock a woman P.O.W. worker was kept in a concentration camp under medieval conditions for eight months. A Mme Sophie Warszawska was jailed by the Germans for disseminating prohibited press matter, and was not released until the conclusion of the war.

It is difficult to imagine anything more treacherous and brutal than the conduct of the Germans towards their Polish allies. In fact, however, the Poles were treated even worse by the Russians when, in 1917, the Bolsheviki had seized the reins of power. Those who fell into the hands of the Cheka in Kiev, Moscow, Zytomierz and elsewhere—and many of them were women—were treated with the most bestial savagery.

Pilsudski, the supreme head of the Polish Legion, had sabotaged Russian mobilization by helping many Polish soldiers from Russian Poland to escape into the territory of the Central Powers. The Polish amazons carried on similar work more dangerously by travelling to Lublin, Kielc, Radom and other places under Russian rule and recruiting members for the Legion, this despite the sharp watch kept by the Russian authorities who, of course, were by now well aware of their activities. Indeed, recruiting for the Legion was the less dangerous part of their activities, for they were frequently commissioned to rouse the Polish population and obtain military information, and did so with signal success.

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In August 1914, when the war front had already extended to Congress Poland, many Polish women volunteers were allowed to go to the front. In Jendrzejew, for example, they served as army cooks—not a particularly heroic matter, we think, until we learn that when the Austrians retired from this area and the Russians returned, these women were arrested for aiding the enemy.

How were the troops of the Polish Legion provisioned? The answer is that they relied on the peasantry, who frequently brought along whole cartloads of food, in addition to gifts of money. But behind this generosity was the intensive propaganda campaign of the women. They called meetings in the villages, sometimes under a tree or in a humble cottage, and explained to the peasants the advantages of an independent Poland and the importance of the Polish Legion to that cause. This was not an easy matter, for if the simple country people were able to absorb the purely patriotic side of the question, they could not understand the alliance of the Poles with the Germans and Austrians. Their distrust of Germany, in particular, was instinctive and, incidentally, it was they who have proved right and not the Polish intelligentsia, which made every effort, both during the Great War and later, to establish peaceful relations with the Germans.

But that was not all the women Legionaries and other patriotic women had to contend with in the way of opinion. There was that part of Polish society which had been brought up in the Pan-

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Slav spirit, and which regarded Polish independence as a vain dream. In those circles a far-reaching autonomy within the Russian Empire would have been considered an entirely satisfactory solution, the struggle for independence was condemned and Pilsudski was held to be a traitor. It was feared that the advocates of these views might denounce the champions of independence to the Russian police. It was the task of the women to counter the agitation of these elements and they did so within the framework of the National Committees (Naczelny Komitet Narodowy), which maintained its own Press Department and secret information and propaganda service.

Women also constituted the 'life and soul' of the 'P.O.W.', the Polish secret military organization which eventually attained such great importance.

A tremendous power behind the Polish national movement was represented by the Women's League (Liga Kobiet) which was founded in Galicia and Silesia before the Great War and supported the rifle clubs from the moment of their formation. The outbreak of war brought a tremendously increased membership to this body—12,000 new members in the first year alone. The Women's League of Warsaw, formed in the year 1913, already had a warlike character, like its branches in Plock, Kielc and other localities, which had thousands of members. It fell to the League to hide and maintain the emissaries of the Legion, Polish

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deserters from the Russian Army and those who failed to report for their conscript service. These, of course, were future recruits for the Polish Legion. The problem of finance was solved by the Women's League in a rather original manner. The women established restaurants and wine shops in the vicinity of railway stations, as well as industrial and other undertakings, which produced substantial revenues for the purposes of the League. Even the officers of the Russian Army were made to contribute, as when they were invited by pretty Polish women to pay liberally for flowers and such-like 'for the benefit of the poor'. The Russians paid up, little knowing that every rouble went to undermine the Russian throne.

Politically, the women were far bolder and more determined than the men. In the year 1916 differences arose between the governments of the Central Powers and the Commander of the Polish Legion, Joseph Pilsudski. The Women's League, on 12th June 1916, held an executive meeting, at which, by an overwhelming majority, the policy of the National Committee was roundly condemned and a vote of confidence in Pilsudski and Bishop Bandurski, Chaplain of the Legion, was passed. After the publication of the Manifesto of 5th November 1916 proclaiming the independence of Poland, the Women's League was the first to demand recognition of the indivisibility of the nation, and, at the same time, an independent Polish government, a Polish Army, and a Polish economic system. Towards the end of the year

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1918 there was a legal action in progress against the Women's League arising from their patriotic zeal; it was only dropped with the conclusion of the war.

Up till now we have been speaking about women and girls. Both terms imply a certain phase of maturity. But the Polish national cause was also served by female children. The Polish Girl Scouts carried not only important messages, but also revolvers and ammunition. They, at least, were not suspected by the Russians, and they were therefore of immense use to the Legion.

However, despite the incalculable importance and vital character of all these activities, the majority of the Polish women wanted to serve in the field, to fight like their men. Indeed, some of them succeeded in lying themselves into the Army and reaching the actual firing line. One young amazon, Sophie Plevinska, joined the infantry, for some months underwent all the hardships of campaign, then had to go to hospital. But in 1920, in the Polish-Bolshevik war, she was again at her post, with a new rifle in her hand, which she did not lay down until the end of the campaign. Another woman, Ludmilla Modzelewska, had the gratification, during the Great War, of seeing her own husband perform heroic feats in face of the enemy, while she herself, together with other women, was acting as stretcher bearer and gathering up the wounded in a hail of bullets. Wanda Görtz served for several months at the front as a gunner, performing all the heavy tasks which

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were part of the front-line routine. She cleaned and fed the horses, chopped wood and helped to drag cannon out of the mire together with the men.

The Polish amazons rendered invaluable services in the defence of Lwow, slipping through the enemy lines and bringing back information about the movements of the Russian Army, as well as news about the morale of the population. In addition, they carried pamphlets, military orders and explosives to the Poles behind the Russian lines, well knowing that if caught they would be executed. Naturally, they had to exercise all their feminine resource and cunning to elude the Russians, but when they were trapped they behaved with courage and dignity. At first, the Russians were not unimpressed and were inclined to treat these women leniently, but as cases of espionage by them multiplied, their sex was not allowed to count and they were dealt with no less severely than the male spies.

Johan Tomcsányi, who had access to the original Polish records, and to whom we owe many of the data given here, wrote that the 'First Brigade of Enlightenment', i.e. the Intelligence Service, which was under the direct command of Pilsudski, included forty-six women, the majority of whom had passed through years of military training. They were students and graduates of foreign Universities, schoolteachers, journalists and other educated women. Their ages ranged from twenty to sixty-five years, which shows that the spirit of

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patriotic service and sacrifice was not confined to any age-group of women, but that the grandmothers and little girls (as mentioned above) were as eager to serve as women of other ages.

One exciting case of feminine espionage was that of Sophie Zawisza who, at the beginning of the war, spent three months spying out the strength and disposition of the enemy in the actual area of operations in the Cracow-Kielc-Radom line and in the environments of Lublin. As she was born and brought up in this area, she knew not only the topography of the region, but also many of its inhabitants and, in addition to gathering reliable information, she also managed to do a great deal of recruiting for the Polish Legion. One day, however, as she was walking in the street with a woman friend, they were arrested by the Russian gendarmes, taken before the local mayor and searched. On Mme Zawisza they found a Polish military pass; on her friend, a sheet of paper, one half of which was covered with a harmless scrawl made by a child's hand, while the other contained notes of a military character. Mme Zawisza, in order to save her friend, immediately claimed the sheet of paper as her own, but the mayor and the gendarme who was guarding the prisoners ignored her. The mayor wrote out a lengthy report, incriminating both women, then he placed it, together with the pass and the sheet of paper, into an envelope. Fortunately, at this point both the mayor and the gendarme were called into the next room. Like lightning, Mme Zawisza bounded to the desk,

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extracted the sheet of paper from the envelope, tore off the incriminating portion, replaced the other portion into the envelope and bounded back to her original place. When, a minute or so later, the mayor and the gendarme returned, they found the envelope where the mayor had left it, apparently undisturbed. After a cursory glance to ascertain that the report and enclosures were still in the envelope, the mayor sealed it and handed it to the gendarme. The prisoners were then taken to Ivangorod (now known as Deblin). Mme Zawisza and her friend could not be certain that they would ever return; this was a war area, and human life was cheap, so that any pretext was sufficient to give employment to a firing squad. Nevertheless, the two women on the way to Ivangorod carefully observed everything, from regimental insignia down to the numbers of lorries, and stored it away in their memories for future use—if they survived. The chief of gendarmes at Ivangorod took them before the local military commandant. A brief interrogation—and the prisoners were not only released, but also provided with identity papers.

A week later Mme Zawisza was back at the headquarters of the Legion, with far more important information than if she had not been arrested. After another week she again returned to her native province. This time she experienced a great deal of reserve on the part of her friends, and soon learned that she was being sought, alive or dead, by the Russian gendarmerie and anyone found

sheltering her would be in grave danger. However, a refuge had to be provided for her, for at this point she was struck down with typhus. By the time she recovered the territory was in German hands. After a short period of leave Mme Zawisza was back again at the headquarters of the Legion—to try on a new dress that was being made specially for her. However, it was not a matter of fashion. The dress was designed for the concealment of some dynamite, with which this young woman was to blow up a bridge. Tall, fair and extremely easy to look at, Mme Zawisza calmly discussed with her woman superior her chances as between the rope and a bullet in case of capture by the Russians; naturally, she would have preferred a bullet. However, she accomplished her task successfully, then continued her dangerous journeys through the Russian lines until she was forbidden to do so by her superiors. Two Polish women had been executed by the Russians in Opoczno. It was said that one of them was Sophie Zawisza, but that was not true. Mme Zawisza is still living and probably doing her part in the life and death struggle in which her unhappy country is engaged to-day.

Another woman, with a sprained ankle and with a load of dynamite on her person, walked from Piotrkow via Czenstochova to Warsaw, a distance of many miles. During the journey she was arrested and released by the Germans, interrogated by the Russians, thrown out of the house of a woman friend where she was to spend the night, yet she

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succeeded in delivering her dangerous burden in Warsaw. There she managed to make friends with several Russian officers, and even to win one Polish colonel in the Russian Army for the cause of Polish independence. From Warsaw she went to Brest in order to spy out the defences of the fortress there. In addition to obtaining valuable information concerning Russian troop movements, she also raised substantial sums of money for the Legion.

The women so far mentioned by name were all young and pretty and were able in certain circumstances to rely in some measure on these attributes to save them. Typical of the middle-aged and old women who possessed no such advantages was Mme Wanda Filipowska. In the middle of January 1915 she was instructed to take a written message from Warsaw to Pilsudski, Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Legion, who was then in Cracow. She could not travel via Kielz, as every Russian gendarme there was on the lookout for her. Learning that the Russians were retreating over part of the line, Mme Filipowska chose to travel behind and in the direction of the Russian Army, mainly by hired carts. At one point the cart strayed into the cross-fire of a minor engagement, whereupon the peasant driver and owner of the cart made her dismount and turned back, leaving her in the middle of the battlefield. Mme Filipowska managed to reach the nearest cottage, only to find that there were a number of Russian soldiers billeted there. The Russians were suspicious and when, during that

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night, Mme Filipowska was about to flee in a secretly hired cart, she was arrested and taken before a Russian officer, who ironically observed: 'Madam, unless you are acting in error, you're heading for Cracow. May I inform you that Cracow is for the present still in enemy territory. I think we will go through your belongings.'

The old lady pleaded that she was travelling towards Lipno, her birthplace and permanent domicile which was now in German hands, but so eager was she to see it in Russian hands again that, impelled by her wish thinking, she had left Warsaw after a fortnight's stay there in order to return home. She was nevertheless thoroughly searched. The message that might have cost her her life was not found, and she was allowed to resume her journey. In the next village she was again searched by the gendarmes, but refused permission to continue. Mme Filipowska boldly demanded to see the military commandant. That in itself was sufficient to allay suspicion. The commandant gallantly took the old lady under his protection. In his opinion she could not continue her journey without risking her life and he therefore requisitioned a cottage for her, where she was to stay until the next Russian advance. The cottage was in the next village and the commandant provided a peasant cart to take Mme Filipowska there. Fortunately, the driver was deaf and was also ignorant of the disposition of the Russian troops, so that the old lady was able to 'misdirect' him on the route towards Lipno. She left the cart in a side road and made for the

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German lines. The Germans arrested and released her twice. Later, the Austrians interrogated her concerning what she had seen in the Russian lines and also wanted to know the nature of the message she was carrying to Pilsudski. But the old lady refused to talk; the message was for Pilsudski alone. Three days later she reported to him personally. At one point of her journey Mme Filipowska was brought before a German officer, who observed: 'I can understand the young ones going through hell for love, but what business has this grand-mother got to be here. It's sheer insanity.'

But this does not exhaust the gallery of heroic Polish women who were in the service of Polish independence during the Great War, and we will mention a few more of them by name. There was Maria Kornilowicz, a young girl, who was instructed to take an important message to Pilsudski. After many hardships and adventures, Maria reached the village of Kuprowo, which lay in the theatre of war and was in Russian hands, but was separated only by a lake and a few kilometres from the German line. She arrived as the guest of the local squire, who had several young daughters. A Russian officer who was billeted in the house liked to spend his spare time with the girls and it was he who, in all innocence, made it possible for Maria to deliver her message. Her difficulty was that there was only one boat on the lake, and that was moored to the opposite shore. Maria therefore suggested a boating party. The officer had the boat

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brought over and the party spent a whole afternoon singing and laughing in the boat. The following day it was the officer who proposed an outing on the lake, but the boat was now again on the opposite shore, Maria having rowed it over during the night. As she landed she was caught by the beam of a German searchlight, and she was in grave danger until she managed to reach the cover of a small wood. Towards dawn she reached the German trenches. She was arrested and taken first to Suwalki, then to Insterburg, and was only liberated at the direct intervention of the Polish Command. When she reached her destination it turned out that the message she carried had already been delivered by another girl; the Warsaw headquarters had taken the precaution of duplicating the message. Naturally, this did not detract from the heroism of Maria.

In most cases, however, the Polish amazons escaped such disappointments. The case of Hedwig Barthel de Weydenthal had all the elements of drama and almost intolerable suspense. She was sent to Lodz in order to bring some dynamite back to Warsaw. Arrived in Lodz, she failed to find anyone at the address given her and it was only with great trouble that she finally succeeded in tracing the dynamite to a chemists' shop. The chemist warned her that the dynamite was old, so that it could not be divided, as it might easily explode. This was a serious problem, the lump being too heavy for her even to lift, let alone carry on a long journey. Hedwig therefore packed it into

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a basket and engaged a working man who was a member of the secret Polish organization to accompany her as her servant to Warsaw. At that time none but military trains communicated between Lodz and Warsaw, and it was only with great difficulty that the girl managed to obtain permission to travel by one of these trains with her 'servant'. They placed the basketful of dynamite on the floor of a compartment crowded with Russian soldiers, where any jolt of the train might have caused it to explode. They reached Warsaw without mishap, however. But their troubles were not over yet. There were no cabs at the station, and Hedwig and her 'servant' stood waiting, not daring to carry the heavy load themselves, in case they happened to drop it. A Russian policeman came up to them and suspiciously began to ask questions. With the thought in her mind that he might at any moment demand to see the contents of her luggage, Hedwig answered with such perfect self-possession that when a cab finally turned up, the Russian policeman helped her companion to load the basket! When they were out of sight of the station, Hedwig and her 'servant' carefully lifted the basket on their knees, lest their luggage should explode and precipitate them into eternity at a violent jolt of the cab; for this was a horse cab and road surfaces in Warsaw were far from perfect. And so, in the end, the dangerous cargo was delivered to its destination.

Another Polish amazon, Wanda Piekarska, was ordered to travel from Warsaw to Kiev and bring

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back information concerning the situation in the city and any troop movements that were taking place there; she was also to bring back a number of revolvers and cartridges. She boarded the train for the return journey carrying a bag with fifteen revolvers, some cartridges and a few sticks of dynamite and, by way of camouflage, a pot of flowers! Her fellow travellers included some Russian Red Cross nurses and officers. The cheery conversation that developed between Wanda and the Russians went on for hours. At one intermediate station she actually alighted for a meal, leaving her belongings in the charge of a Russian officer; he was to keep an eye on it, 'otherwise it might get stolen'. Arrived at their destination, Wanda requested the officer to carry the pot of flowers for her, while she herself carried her heavy bag. In this way she escaped her greatest danger, a search of her luggage by the Russian police. It was not until she was driving away in a hired cab that she could be certain that, once more, she had escaped a Russian firing squad.

The Polish amazons frequently received such dangerous commissions. Maria Stronska, for example, was instructed to spy out the fortress of Ivangorod, a prohibited zone, which civilians were not even allowed to approach. Maria applied to General Ivanoff, commandant of the fortress, pleading that her fiancé, who had fought for Russia, was buried underneath the fortress and she must visit his grave. Who could have refused the request of the grief-stricken girl? In any case,

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she had been a student at a Russian University and that, too, was a reassuring factor. Thus Maria was able to penetrate the fortress and returned to headquarters with a great deal of valuable information. Later, the Russian gendarmes searched for her for months; but she was never caught.

Generally, the Polish espionage service was extremely well organized, as may be gathered from the writings of Alexandra Pilsudska, wife of the great Polish leader and Alexander Kraushar, the author, as well as from the publications of the Polish Ministry of Education. In the post-war years much publicity was given to the spy services of the Central Powers and the Allies, and particularly those of Britain and France. Little was published outside Poland concerning the Polish organizations which, however, worked no less smoothly and efficiently.

It must be remembered that the Poles were completely under the heel of the Russian tyranny, which maintained a powerful counter-espionage service against the Poles. Proved membership of the Polish military organization was punished by death, whether the person concerned had actually been guilty of any anti-Russian act or not. Yet—and this alone is sufficient evidence of the efficiency of the Poles—the Russians rarely succeeded in conclusively proving the membership of any person. However, even suspicion was enough to arrest and imprison a Polish man or woman. What happened in such cases is typified by the case of Anna Chelmicka who, after being twice arrested on

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suspicion, was sentenced to be interned in the interior of Russia. At the railway station of a small town named Lida, on the way to the internment camp, the prisoners were allowed to alight for water. Anna 'lost her way' and strayed into a wood adjoining the station. Soon she was joined by a young man, who was also trying to escape. Together they stumbled through the wood, only to be caught at the other end by a group of Russian soldiers who, after beating them with the bestial brutality of their kind, took them back to the station and flung them into a train.

Anna finally landed in a women's prison in Moscow which was crowded with other Polish women. She was charged with attempting to escape, but such was the influence of the Polish organization in Moscow that they secured her release in consideration of her injuries and the effects of bad prison food, which was ordinarily no consideration at all with the Russians. Members of the organization placed her in a sanatorium, but although she was under police supervision, immediately on her recovery she started an agitation among the Polish youth in Moscow to convince them that their place was in Pilsudski's Legion. In the summer of 1916 she fled to Petrograd and thence to Finland, where the Finnish revolutionaries helped her to reach the comparative safety of a fishing smack which sailed by night and hid by day. After many hairbreadth escapes from capture by Russian warships, Anna transferred to a smugglers' motor-boat which took

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her into Swedish waters. She returned home via Germany, where she was arrested and released. The same happened in Austria. Finally, however, she was able to report to Pilsudski. She gave him a detailed account of the situation in Russia, the activities of the Polish organization there, and other important matters. All of which shows that even when captured and tortured, the Polish women had no other thought than to serve their country in every possible way.

There was a whole army of Polish women spies everywhere, in Russia as well as in other countries, gathering information, making propaganda among the Poles and, at all times, cleverly camouflaging their activities by an assumed profession or by the exercise of their charms on enemy officers.

But why was it that the women, and mostly young women of the educated classes, thus distinguished themselves in tasks which are ordinarily undertaken only by the most intrepid of men? Were they out for a 'thrill'? In other words, was their fierce determination, their reckless courage, their amazing resource in circumstances of grave danger, due to causes that belong to the realm of sexual pathology? The answer is that in the case of the Polish women, with their long tradition of heroic self-sacrifice for people and country, patriotism was a strong enough impelling force. As Sophie Barthel de Weydenthal soberly wrote:

'Intelligence work was not pleasant, but it was most important and necessary, and had to

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be attended to; but when it was all over it was best to forget it.'

However, if that is the attitude of the individual women who served their country during the Great War, and if little has been said even in Poland about their tremendous services, the heroic part played by the women of Poland in re-conquering their country's independence will live in the hearts of the Polish people for ever. The surviving former women spies are to-day middle-aged wives and mothers and it is as such that they have experienced the fresh catastrophe that has befallen their country. The fact that they never occupied leading positions in the independent Poland which they had helped to create was not due to national ingratitude, but to the national mentality, which takes it for granted that a woman is happiest at home.

Before we conclude this chapter let us, by way of a modest memorial, mention some of the Polish women who died for the national cause.

Wanda Szafir fought and died in the firing line at Suwalki, on the northern frontier. Mme Linzenbarth was tortured to death in Kiev for refusing to give away her comrades. Her mother was executed at the same time because she had proudly claimed to have brought up her daughter in the patriotic spirit. Mlle Stanislawa Poplawska was also murdered in Kiev. Mlle Latallo, who rendered brilliant service as an intelligence officer was caught in the woods of Minsk while carrying

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a message, tortured and shot. Wanda Langert was caught in similar circumstances and was bayoneted by a Russian soldier when she tried to resist arrest and use her revolver. In Charkow Natalia Irzykiewicz, Wanda Burdon, Hedwig Goszczycka, Ella Sikorska and Marika Skrzycka, were all tortured to betray their comrades, then executed. They went to their deaths without soiling their lips with a single word that might have harmed others. Hedwig Tejszerska was made to dig her own grave and shot on the edge of it. Mme Krasicka and her daughters Alina and Stanislaw, aged sixteen and nineteen, respectively, were executed one Christmas Eve. Maria Gorzewska was jailed for harbouring and helping Polish deserters from the Russian Army, and terribly tortured. She died from typhus. Stenia Czarlinska-Piekarska, Anna Dworzecka-Bondanowicz and Maria Fedorowicz, were murdered for similar reasons. The majority of these women were under thirty years of age.

Many other Polish amazons died as a result of the hardships connected with their work, or from wounds. The latter category included Maria Duleinbianka, the talented artist.

A high tribute to the devotion and dauntless courage of the Polish amazons is paid in the posthumously published notes of Dr. Schulze, Inspector of Military Police and head of the intelligence service under the German Governor of Warsaw in 1916-1918. He wrote that the women of the P.O.W. worked with death-defying courage

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and were not daunted by any threats or punishments.

A high place among the heroic Polish amazons is due to the Polish women who for five months defended Lwow against the Ukrainian forces. The retreating Austrians had handed over not to the Poles but to the Ukrainian military organization, and on the 1st November 1918, the city woke up to find the Ukrainian flag flying from all public buildings and Ukrainian soldiers patrolling the streets. The local Poles, with hardly any arms, and under tremendous handicaps as regards communications between the various parts of the city, organized a military force which included some 600 women. It was they who eased the scarcity of arms on the Polish side by simply stealing into the Ukrainian lines and lifting the weapons of the sleeping soldiers. They also fought in many pitched battles. Mme Alexandra Zagorska had her fourteen-year-old son with her in the trenches during an attack. When the child was shot she went on fighting and only attended to him when she was relieved. Helen Bujwid took part in a bayonet charge and returned uninjured—with several Ukrainian prisoners. Many of the women died in the defence of their city before, five months later, help came from the Polish Army and the Ukrainians were suppressed.

There is no end to the stories of self-sacrificing devotion and death-defying heroism on the part of the Polish amazons. During the present conflict we have heard little about the daughters of these

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women, but it is certain that they are proving worthy of their mothers and grandmothers and perhaps when Poland has once more shaken off her oppressors, there will arise a historian of their deeds.

## *Chapter Twelve*

### RETURN OF THE WHITE EAGLE

THE POLISH REPUBLIC WAS THE EMBODIMENT OF the strong spirit of the Polish people. However, we must know the physical events that led up to its creation, as well as the history of its brief existence before we can understand why Poland succumbed in a few weeks even to the overwhelming might of the German Army.

On 14th August 1914, the Grand Duke Nicholas, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies, issued from Petrograd the following proclamation:

‘Poles! The hour has sounded when the sacred dream of your fathers and forefathers can come true. A century and a half has passed since the living flesh of Poland was torn in pieces, but her soul is not dead. It lives in the hope that the hour will come in which resuscitated Poland will reconcile herself fraternally with Great Russia. The Russian troops bring to you the happy news of that reconciliation. May the frontiers disappear that divide the Polish people, thus making of them a unity under the sceptre of the Emperor of Russia! Under that sceptre Poland will be born again, free in religion, in language, and in self-government. Russia expects from you equal consideration for the rights of the nationalities with which history has linked you. Great Russia comes to meet you with open heart and brotherly hand.

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She is convinced that the sword which struck the enemy at Grünwald (Tannenberg) is not yet rusty. From the shores of the Pacific to the Northern seas the Russian regiments are advancing. It is the dawn of a new life for you. May there shine resplendent in that dawn the sign of the Cross, the symbol of the Passion and the Resurrection of peoples!'

Remarkably enough, in view of the treatment Russia had meted out to the Poles during the previous century and a half, this proclamation was received with immense enthusiasm and faith by most Poles in Russian Poland. On 17th August the *Gazeta Warszawska* published a declaration made by four of the Polish political parties in Russia. It said:

The representatives of the undersigned political parties assembled on 16th August 1914, in Warsaw welcome the proclamation of His Imperial Highness, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, as an act of cardinal historical importance, and believe firmly that after the end of the War the promises expressed in the proclamation will be fully realized, that the dreams of our fathers and forefathers will come true, that the body of Poland torn in pieces a hundred and fifty years ago will join together and that the frontiers that now separate the Polish nation will disappear. The blood shed by Poland's sons in the common fight against

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Germany will at the same time be a sacrifice on the altar of resurrected Poland.

This declaration was signed on behalf of the National Democratic Party, Polish Progressive Party, Realist Politics Party and Polish Progressive Union.'

These two documents show with tragic clearness that to the Poles the Great War was a fratricidal war not only because they were forced to fight on either side, but also because they found it in their hearts to be loyal to their worst oppressor. During the course of the war there were Russophil Poles and there were Austrophil Poles, and there were many conflicts between them. When the whole of Russian Poland was in the hands of the Germans and Austrians, there were leading Poles who favoured a recruiting campaign in order to raise further Polish armies for the Central Powers. Pilsudski alone among the ostensible friends of Austria and Germany realized that this would be to the detriment of the Polish nation. On 15th August 1915, at a meeting in Warsaw, he said: 'To-day the Germans have taken the place of the Russians in Poland. We must resist the Germans. I do not see why we should not enter into relations with the Russophils.' His friends could not understand him and although he managed to organize a covert resistance to the Central Powers, there were many splits and violent conflicts between Poles and Poles.

This was inevitable, as the Poles were being

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courted both by the Central Powers and Russia, as well as Russia's Allies, and their faith was accordingly divided. Germany was flattering them by reopening the Polish University at Warsaw and establishing a Polish polytechnic. Sazonoff, the Tsarist Foreign Minister, declared in the Duma (in February 1916) Russia's determination to unify Poland. Incidentally, he had the staggering impudence to remind the Poles of the tyrannous treatment of the German Poles! The Italian Parliament, at the end of 1915, had before it a motion expressing 'the most ardent wish that the very noble Polish nation, which had been for centuries an important factor in civilization, defending Europe from Tartar and Turkish invasions, and destined in the future to fill a great role in the stabilization of peace, should be reconstituted as a unity in a free and independent State.' In May 1916, a French mission was sent to Petrograd, partly for the purpose of obtaining from the Russian Government definite proposals in favour of Poland. In view of all this, was it any wonder that the Poles were completely bewildered?

On the material side the plight of the Polish people was terrible. The whole of Congress Poland had been devastated by the retreating Russians, and the country was now being 'used' by the Germans 'for the prosecution of the war', as Ludendorff himself confessed. Even the American attempts to relieve distress in Poland were frustrated partly by the Allied objection to the

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importation of supplies into Poland which might be used by the Germans, but mainly through the German refusal to allow such supplies to come in on reasonable terms. Indeed, the Germans declared, in July 1916, that the prospects of a good harvest were such that foreign relief was unnecessary!

Naturally, all this could not fail to affect the Polish Legions, and by the autumn of 1916 they were practically in a state of disintegration. It was then, on 5th November 1916, that the Central Powers proclaimed the 'Kingdom of Poland'. Naturally, the proclamation was not dictated by any intention to liberate Poland; it was, in fact, a sprat to catch a mackerel. Germany and Austria needed more men in the field and thought they could get them in Poland. Yet this patently insincere act on the part of the Central Powers was enough to revive the spirits and hopes of the Legions. Even so, however, the Central Powers did not even pretend that they wanted to create an independent Poland. According to the protocol signed on 12th August by the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Holweg, and Burian, contained the following terms:

1. Poland to become an independent hereditary Kingdom.
2. Rectification of frontiers in favour of Germany.
3. Exclusion of the Government of Suvalki from the Kingdom.

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4. No independent foreign policy for the Kingdom.
5. Its army to be under Germany.
6. No part of German or Austrian Poland to be included.

The most important point in the protocol from the Central Powers' point of view was, of course, point five. Indeed, immediately after the proclamation of 5th November came a call to the Poles to join the 'Polish Army'. The response was not particularly satisfactory from the Central Powers' point of view. As to Pilsudski, although he was flatteringly described in the German newspaper of the German Governor, Beseler, as 'the father of the Polish Army', he did not encourage a general enlistment of the Poles at all. At all events, on 14th January 1917, a provisional Polish State Council of twenty-five members was inaugurated at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. It consisted of twenty-five members whose names had been submitted to and approved by the Central Powers. Pilsudski was one of them. He was appointed head of the Council's Military Commission, but the Central Powers did not trust him and they made their own arrangements for recruiting Poles into the 'Polish Army'. The Council of State, of course, possessed no effective power in any direction and the 'Kingdom' continued to be ruled by Beseler and Kuk, the Governors appointed by the Central Powers. The Council's demand, or rather request, that the administration of justice

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and public instruction should be handed over to them and that they should be given a share in regulating the food supplies of the country, was simply ignored. The recognition of the independence of Poland by the Bolshevik Government which had meanwhile come into existence did not affect the Polish situation. Beseler demanded that the Council should issue a call to arms to the Poles, which they would have done, but for the determined opposition of Pilsudski, who later resigned from it. The Council then gave in to Beseler, adopted the oath as required by the Central Powers, and instructed the Legions to take it. However, Pilsudski secretly ordered them not to take it and out of some 6,000 troops belonging to Russian Poland, 5,200 obeyed him. They were immediately disarmed by the Germans and interned, while Pilsudski himself was arrested and imprisoned in the fortress of Magdeburg. The Germans also arrested many members of the P.O.W., the Polish Military Organization, which had for some time functioned openly, but now went 'underground' once more.

On 12th September 1917, the German and Austrian Emperors appointed a Regency Council consisting of the Archbishop of Warsaw, the Mayor of Warsaw and a country gentleman. A Government was formed and allowed to function subject to the approval of the German-Austrian Governors-General.

The next decisive event in the re-birth of Poland was the Allied declaration at Versailles on

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3rd June 1918, to the effect that 'the creation of a united and independent Polish State, with free access to the sea, constitutes one of the conditions for a just and durable peace and the rule of right in Europe'. By then the Regency Council had created a sort of Parliament called the Council of State, composed of 110 members, partly nominated by the Regency Council and partly elected. The Council of State first met on 22nd June, and sat intermittently until 31st July, but its members were so hostile to the Central Powers that the German Commissary intervened. The Council was adjourned till September, but by then the Germans were retreating on the Western front and the entire position of the Central Powers had changed, with corresponding changes for Poland and its Regents. The Poles now had Legions in France and in various parts of Russia, as well as at home.

On 3rd November 1918, with Russia out of the war, Germany defeated and Austria-Hungary toppling to destruction, a Government appointed by the Regency Council proclaimed Poland a Republic. On 7th November, a provisional government of the Polish Republic of the People was formed in Lublin—in addition to the Government newly appointed in Warsaw by the Regency. Poland was now free, but she received her freedom under conditions of utter confusion. On 11th November, Armistice Day, Pilsudski arrived in Warsaw, having been released from Magdeburg on the outbreak of the German revolution. On

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the same day the Regency Council placed into his hands the supreme command of the Army, while on the 14th it resigned transferring its powers to Pilsudski until the formation of a National Government.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

### BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW

LET US PAUSE TO CONSIDER THE NATURE OF THE task with which Pilsudski and the Polish people were faced at this moment of Poland's liberation after a century and a half of cruel oppression. It is the unspoken thought of many to-day that Poland might have been expected to hold the German Army for at least a few months, thereby altering the whole course of the war, since the Poles had twenty years in which to build up their State and their armed forces. A brief retrospect will show that that is not a correct view. The creation of the New Poland was like 'making bricks without straw'. The whole country had been devastated by the contending armies during four years of war, plundered by its Tsarist 'friends', as well as by its German-Austrian 'friends', so that the vast mass of the people was living in utter destitution. The industries and agriculture of the country lay in ruins, the Treasury was empty, the administration, which had only partially been organized by the Regency Council, in a state of utter chaos and confusion; the enemy was still on Polish soil, and the menace of Bolshevism was looming darkly in the East, while political conflict between the numerous parties and groups was endangering the internal peace of the nation.

The Socialist Republic set up in Lublin, as well as the seizure of Lwow, a Polish city, by the Ukrainians and the setting up by them of a 'People's Republic of the Western Ukraine', had

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to be dealt with, in addition to the tens of thousands of Germans who were still on Polish soil—fully armed. As yet, there was no Polish Army, and the means of creating one were lacking. Even the frontiers of the new country had not been defined.

It was from the remnants of the Legions that Pilsudski created the nucleus of the Polish National Army. The P.O.W., which had been commanded by Smigly-Rydz during Pilsudski's internment in Magdeburg, provided more than 10,000 men, and there were also thousands of volunteers. It was with this new and for the greater part untried army behind him that Pilsudski, with consummate skill and diplomacy, managed to disarm the 80,000 Germans who were still on Polish territory and send them home to their own country, despite German intrigues to embroil this German force with the Poles. A worse menace had to be faced in the East, where the Ukrainian Republic of Petlura which, early in 1919, made a treaty of union with the Western Ukrainian Republic. There was also the spectre of Bolshevism, which became more and more real as the German armies withdrew from White Russia and other areas and were replaced by Red Troops.

However, by the beginning of 1919, Pilsudski had organized an army of approximately 120,000 men. They were ill-equipped and lacking in homogeneity, and the urgency of sending them into the field made matters worse. Pilsudski appealed to the Allies for help, but the Allies

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only remembered that he had fought for Austria and had collaborated with the Germans as a member of the Council of State, and his appeal was left unheeded. Worst of all, the food situation in Poland was desperate. Millions of people lived on the verge of starvation and there was a great deal of sickness. In some areas no crops had been put in at all. There were hundreds of thousands of unemployed among the industrial population, most of the factories lay in ruins and, in any case, there were no raw materials and no markets. The Government had neither money, nor credit.

At this time—at the beginning of 1919—Poland was saved by the United States, which granted large credits to the Republic and sent tens of thousands of tons of food to relieve famine in the country. The generosity of the Americans was in no small measure due to the fact that Paderewski, the great Polish pianist, was then Prime Minister of Poland. His tremendous prestige was of incalculable value to his country. By the time this American help arrived a democratic franchise had been introduced in Poland and the first General Election had taken place.

The American help made a great deal of difference not only economically, but also politically. However, it did not solve all Poland's problems. For, throughout this period Poland was fighting on some of her fronts, against the Ukrainians, the Bolsheviks, the Czechs, and these struggles continued until the end of 1919—with an Army that was still badly equipped and relied for victory

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mainly on its fighting spirit and the daring of its leader, Pilsudski.

The great crisis of the New Poland, the crisis of 'to be or not to be', came in 1920, when Pilsudski, anticipating a Soviet attack, took the initiative. By then he had an army of 600,000 men and he scored an initial success by occupying Kiev and other areas. But his success was short-lived. The Red Army, far better equipped, and far larger in numbers than the Polish armies in the various sections, launched a counter offensive which swept the Poles back to the very gates of Warsaw. The Soviet made no secret of its object in the war with Poland. The Commander of the Red troops issued an order on 2nd July 1920 in which he said: 'The destinies of world revolution will be settled in the West. Our way toward world-wide conflagration passes over the corpse of Poland.' Nothing could be clearer than that.

Poland appealed for help to the Allies. The details of the negotiations that ensued are irrelevant to our purpose here. Suffice it to say that no help came. Poland received neither money, nor equipment, only an Anglo-French mission. The Soviet Army seemed to be marking time and nothing happened for many weeks. Then Pilsudski evolved a brilliant plan of attack (wrongly attributed to General Weygand, Marshal Foch's Chief of Staff, and a member of the Anglo-French mission) and, relying on the ardent spirit of his men against overwhelming odds, inflicted a smashing defeat on the Red troops, capturing tens of thousands of

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prisoners and a vast amount of equipment. Warsaw—and Poland—was saved. The Reds were pursued by the Polish Army in their headlong flight until Pilsudski found it necessary to call a halt. (After the Battle of Warsaw, General Weygand made it quite clear that the credit for the Polish victory belonged entirely to the Poles, i.e., Pilsudski. On 21st August 1920, a few days after the Battle, General Weygand said to a correspondent of the *Paris Information*: 'The victory which is being celebrated in Warsaw is a Polish victory; the military operations were executed by Polish generals in accordance with a Polish plan.')

What Pilsudski's victory meant to the world may be gathered from the following passage in an article by Lord D'Abernon which appeared in a Polish newspaper ten years later:

'The history of contemporary civilization knows no event of greater importance than the Battle of Warsaw 1920 and none of which the significance is less appreciated. The danger menacing Europe at the moment was parried, and the whole episode was forgotten. Had the battle been a Bolshevik victory, it would have been a turning point in European history, for there is no doubt at all that the whole of Central Europe would at that moment have been open to the influence of Communist propaganda and to the Soviet invasion, which it could with difficulty have resisted. It is evident from speeches made in Russia during the war against

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Poland that the Soviet plans were very far reaching. In the more industrialized German towns plans were made on a large scale to proclaim a Soviet regime a few days after Warsaw had fallen. . . . Several times Poland has been the bulwark of Europe against Asiatic invasion, yet never had Poland's services been greater, never had the danger been more imminent. The events of 1920 also deserve attention for another reason: victory was attained above all thanks to the strategical genius of one man and thanks to the carrying through of a manœuvre so dangerous as to necessitate not only genius, but heroism. . . . It should be the task of the political writers to explain to European opinion that Poland saved Europe in 1920, and that it is necessary to keep Poland powerful and in harmonious relations with Western European civilization, for Poland is the barrier to the everlasting peril of an Asiatic invasion.'

However, the Bolsheviks had not had enough and Pilsudski had to fight and beat them again and again, until finally, on 14th November, the negotiations which resulted in the Treaty of Riga were begun. These negotiations went on into 1921, and ended with, among other things, a clear definition of Poland's eastern frontier. Incidentally, during the Soviet-Polish war Czechoslovakia took the opportunity to wrest the Teschen territory from Poland.

The Constitution of the Republic was passed by

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a majority of the Sejm, after stormy debates, on 17th March 1921. That year was, in addition, a year of treaties of various kinds. There was the Polish-Danzig Treaty regulating the relationship between Poland and the Free City, the Polish-Roumanian and Polish-Czechoslovak Treaties and, above all, the Franco-Polish Alliance.

During the years from 1918 till 1935, when Marshal Pilsudski died, many things happened in Poland, some of vital importance, some entirely unimportant; but there were two permanent features in Polish national life. One was lack of money and the practical destitution of the great mass of the people, the other, bitter conflicts and feuds in the Sejm and the Senate, which rendered the Polish Houses of Parliament almost impotent. A third feature, which cannot be said to have been permanent, but was very prevalent in Poland, was bribery and corruption in connection with official appointments, the granting of concessions, etc. As regards the financial situation, it should be remembered that the country had been devastated not only by the Great War, but again during the victorious Polish campaign in 1920. The extent of the devastation may be gathered from the fact that of buildings alone nearly *two million* were destroyed, including thousands of schools and churches and hundreds of thousands of dwelling houses, factories and agricultural buildings. The Poles made superhuman efforts towards recovery, but there was so much to be reconstructed and re-created that continual financial crises were inevitable. The world

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economic crisis hit the Poles harder than perhaps any other country in the world. The conflicts in the Sejm and Senate, and outside, were carried on with the fierce passion which is characteristic of the Poles, and it might be said that this was one of the things which the Polish people might have prevented, so that their country could be consolidated all the sooner. However, these conflicts were not the fault but the misfortune of the Polish people. They were not merely a matter of temperament; they were inherent in the nature of the situation. It must be remembered that the Polish Republic consisted of territories that had been under the rule of three different foreign Empires for a century and a half, so that wide divergences in political outlook were inevitable for that reason alone in the new State. The Parliamentary and other conflicts were part of the pangs of re-birth. Even the bribery and corruption that was so prevalent in the New Poland during the first year of her existence was an inescapable outcome of poverty and destitution in the country.

Naturally, the Poles had their faults, and they made many mistakes that they could have avoided, but on the whole they were suffering from difficulties which had been thrust upon them by fate. Despite those difficulties, however, the New Poland accomplished many miracles. It built Gdynia, a wonderful new port that cost millions of money and incalculable sacrifices of another sort. It developed a system of education that was far superior than anything partitioned Poland had

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ever had. It introduced measures of Agrarian Reform that improved the lot of the mass of the people and at the same time enabled the country to produce an exportable surplus of food. It reconstructed and re-created everything that had been destroyed during the Great War and during the subsequent Polish campaigns. And it built up a great army which in personal valour was second to none, but lacked modern equipment owing to the poverty of the country. In a word, the New Poland was on the way to a high level of development and to unassailable strength, but the twenty years granted to it by Destiny was too short a time in which to make good the terrible ravages and devastations of a century and half.

## Chapter Fourteen

### NAZI AGGRESSION

THE PRESENT WAR AND ITS PRESENT RESULT FOR Poland must be considered in that light. However, here again, we can learn a great deal from facts stated in chronological order.

The story begins in the year 1932, when the foreign policy of the Polish Republic was placed into the hands of Colonel Joseph Beck, who has since played a decisive, though not always happy role in shaping the destinies of his country. Colonel Beck was a friend and confidant of Marshal Pilsudski, who was by now gravely ill. The Minister for Foreign Affairs also enjoyed the confidence of the country as a whole and of President Mosicki.

Joseph Beck is the son of a Russian-Polish patriot who was obliged to flee from Tsarist Russian persecution and settled in Austrian Poland. Joseph studied at the High School in Cracow and on the outbreak of the Great War joined Pilsudski's Legion, thus beginning a long association with the Marshal. After Pilsudski's internment by the Germans, Beck was for a time posted to a Hungarian regiment. Re-joining Pilsudski in Warsaw after the war, he became Polish Military Attaché in Paris in 1922, but resigned in 1923 when Pilsudski temporarily retired into private life. After the Warsaw *coup d'état* of 1926, when Pilsudski became dictator of Poland, Beck became his *chef de cabinet*. From then on he exercised a considerable influence at home and in 1932 he became Minister for

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Foreign Affairs. In that capacity, he was the author of the German-Polish Pact of 1934, which held for exactly five years. In France and Geneva he was regarded as pro-Nazi and as the man who had helped to consolidate Hitler's power.

His most sensational and most hotly debated act was the German-Polish Pact. It shocked the Democracies and virtually ended the Franco-Polish friendship which had been of such immense help in the up-building of the Polish Republic. Recent events have proved that Colonel Beck's conception was wrong, but it cannot be denied that the Pact was fully justified by diplomatic considerations. Whether the Polish Foreign Minister really believed in its efficacy or not, it is impossible to say. At all events, the Pact contained the only Hitlerian promise which took him as long as five years to break; and if Colonel Beck ever believed in it he realized his mistake during the months after the Munich Pact concluded between the British Prime Minister and the Nazi Dictator.

Barely five months after that Pact, on 15th March 1939, Germany annexed Slovakia. On 16th March Germany annexed Bohemia and Moravia. On 22nd March Germany annexed Memelland.

By then all the world knew that Poland was next on Hitler's list. Colonel Beck paid several visits to London at this time and on 31st March Britain and France gave a pledge to Poland to

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support her against aggression. However, it must be remembered that Colonel Beck was meanwhile responsible for Poland's harsh policy against the prostrate Czechoslovakia! The arguments that were advanced in Poland in connection with Czechoslovakia's attitude and actions in an earlier period were irrelevant, for the Polish occupation of the Teschen territory was equivalent to indirect support for Hitler.

However, let us follow the events that arose from the Allied pledge to Poland in their chronological sequence. On 13th April 1939 the Franco-British pledge was extended to Rumania and Greece. On the 15th of the same month Britain began negotiations for a pact with Russia. On 27th April Britain introduced compulsory military service. On 12th May Britain and France concluded a Pact of Mutual Assistance with Turkey. All this was the outcome of the Franco-British guarantee to Poland.

Hitler was then already determined to attack Poland and the process of preparing for a coup in Danzig was in full swing. By the end of July there were at least two German army corps in the city and a German general had arrived there to organize the Nazi forces. The Polish Government was handling the situation in a manner which evoked praise from Mr Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, for its 'wise and statesmanlike attitude'. Meanwhile, the British Government had worked out detailed plans, ready to be put into operation at short notice, for

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petrol rationing, while Members of all Parties in the House of Commons were able to agree that Britain possessed the best civil defence system in Europe. The Franco-British negotiations with Russia were still proceeding and had reached a stage where the official Russian Tass Agency was able to say that the only difficulty in the way of agreement with Britain and France was that of ensuring that 'no loophole should be left in the formula "indirect aggression" for aggressors making an attempt on the independence of the Baltic States'. Also, M Molotoff, the Soviet Prime Minister and Foreign Commissar, had already made the suggestion that staff talks with Britain and France should be followed by military agreement.

Meanwhile, Europe was kept guessing as to what Italy would do in case of war between Germany on the one hand and Poland and the Western Democracies on the other. The Italian Army was manœuvring in Lombardy. To demonstrate the mobility of the Italian forces, 50,000 men were carried mechanically to their objective and threw a 600-foot pontoon across the Ticino river on the way. Germany, in turn, was preparing for the coming conflict. In Moravia and Slovakia the Nazis were fortifying the Polish frontier, erecting twelve-feet-high barbed-wire entanglements and arming the so-called customs houses, which were actually machine-gun posts.

At the beginning of August the Danzig situation seemed slightly easier, the Senate having with-

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drawn, at Poland's demand, the order that certain Polish customs officials on the East Prussian frontier would no longer be recognized. At the same time, Marshal Smigly-Rydz, speaking before Polish Legionaries, warned Germany that force would be met by force. Danzig was Polish and would remain Polish. It was not Poland who had opened the Danzig question—and it was not Poland who was breaking her engagements. But the slight easing of the situation was only a move on the part of Hitler. Herr Forster, the Danzig Gauleiter, was visiting Hitler at Berchtesgaden, and Hitler was planning an immediate conference with Generals von Brauchitsch and Keitel and his party leaders. In England, probably by way of a gentle hint to Nazi Germany, His Majesty the King was inspecting 133 ships of the Reserve Fleet in Weymouth Bay, while air exercises on an unprecedented scale were held over Southern England. Herr Forster returned to Danzig to declare, in a speech he delivered on 3rd August, that the people of Danzig were absolutely clear and firm in their conviction that the hour of liberation was at hand and that Danzig would again return to the Reich.

On 5th August Count Ciano, Mussolini's Foreign Minister, had the first of two meetings with Hitler and, subsequently, several 'conversations' with Herr von Ribbentrop. It was hinted in the German Press that these conversations went far beyond the question of Danzig. Meanwhile, the Nazis were busy improving the

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means of communication between East Prussia and Danzig, throwing pontoons across the Vistula and widening and reconstructing roads.

The news of the visit of Herr Burckhardt, League High Commissioner in Danzig, to Hitler in Berchtesgaden was the sensation of the second week in August. But the Nazis were now already openly talking about the partition of Poland—not merely the return of Danzig and the Corridor to the Reich, but partition. Field-Marshal Göring's newspaper, the *National-Zeitung*, wrote that Poland was liquidated by its neighbours at the close of the eighteenth century because she had lost her right to live an independent national life. 'History of a Liberalistic kind has made an historic injustice out of this act of reasonableness and political necessity . . . Poland in 1939 is what she was in 1762: a blot on the world's civilization, a danger to Europe's peace and a disaster for her own inhabitants.' The rest of the German Press declared that there could be neither conference nor compromise over Danzig. (One wonders whether, if Mr Winston Churchill had been First Lord of the Admiralty at this time, he would not have taken immediate measures to ensure that German submarines should not occupy vantage points along the trade routes in the Atlantic. . . .) There was a terrific outcry over the arrest by the Poles of some scores of German spies and *agents provocateurs* in Upper Silesia, though the majority of these servants of Hitler were released.

But Germany was forging ahead with her war

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preparations. The 'military treaty' concluded by the Nazis with Slovakia in the second week of August (when the Nazi military occupation of that country had already been completed) gave legal form to one more move in those preparations. France and Britain once more made clear to Germany their determination to honour their guarantees to Poland. Sir Nevile Henderson, British Ambassador to Berlin, saw Baron von Weizsaecker for this purpose on 11th August, while M Coulondre, the French Ambassador, called at the German Foreign Office to fulfil a similar mission a few days earlier.

A minor bombshell—which was recognized as such only in the light of subsequent events—exploded on 20th August, when it was announced in Berlin that a commercial agreement between Germany and Russia had been signed the previous night, Russia undertaking to supply Germany with raw materials to the value of 180 million marks during the next two years, to be exchanged against manufactured goods.

Twenty-four hours later came the following staggering announcement from Berlin:

'The German Government and the Soviet Government have come to an understanding with regard to the conclusion of a non-aggression pact. The German Foreign Minister, Herr von Ribbentrop, will arrive in Moscow on Wednesday to bring the negotiations to a conclusion.'

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The announcement was preceded by a long conference at Berchtesgaden between Herr Hitler, Herr von Ribbentrop, and the sinister Herr von Papen, German Ambassador to Turkey, who had just returned from a secret visit to Moscow. Here was a bombshell indeed! The Franco-British-Soviet diplomatic *and* military 'talks' were still proceeding in Moscow, and there had been not the slightest hint on either side, least of all on the Russian, that they were to be broken off. Indeed, while London and Paris were recovering from the shock, the staff talks continued.

Everyone knew that war was now inevitable, though there was still a faint hope in some quarters that the announcement did not mean what it did mean. The attitude of the British Government was expressed in a Cabinet statement issued after a meeting:

'The Cabinet at their meeting to-day considered the international situation in all its bearings. In addition to a report that had been received as to military movements in Germany, the Cabinet took note of the report that a non-aggression pact between the German and Soviet Governments was about to be concluded. They had no hesitation in deciding that such an event would in no way affect their obligations to Poland, which they have repeatedly stated in public and which they are determined to fulfil.'

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The statement then referred to the peace efforts of the British Government, adding that 'if, in spite of all their efforts, others insist on the use of force, they are prepared and determined to resist it to the uttermost.'

It says much for the self-imposed discipline and the true British good breeding of the British Press that not a word of recrimination appeared in the newspapers concerning the 'bungling' of the negotiations with the Soviet. Actually, it would be difficult to prove that there had been any 'bungling' on the part of the British Government without a definite knowledge of what Russia would have done to Poland as an ally of the Western Democracies in a war against Germany, or even if there had been no war. And, of course, that knowledge is not available and will never be available.

The Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact was signed in Moscow on the evening of 23rd August, and its essential clauses were as follows:

Article 1: The two contracting Powers undertake to refrain from any act of force, any aggressive act and any attacks against each other or in conjunction with any other Powers.

Article 2: If one of the contracting Powers should become the object of warlike action on the part of a third Power the other contracting Power will in no way support the third Power.

Article 3: The Governments of the two contracting Powers will in future remain in consultation with one another in order to inform them-

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selves about questions which touch their common interests.

Article 4: None of the two contracting Powers will join any other group of Powers which directly or indirectly is directed against one of the two.

The British Ambassador, Sir Nevile Henderson, flew to Berchtesgaden to convey to Hitler a Note from the British Government repeating its statement of policy. A German communiqué issued after this visit declared that 'The Führer left no doubt in the British Ambassador's mind that the obligations undertaken by the British Government could not move Germany to renounce her national, vital interests.'

After this, events moved swiftly. The British Parliament conferred emergency powers on the Government. Hitler had a long conference in Berlin with General Keitel, Admiral Raeder and other military and political leaders. Hitler invited Sir Nevile Henderson to see him, and Sir Nevile later returned to London by aeroplane. In London the formal treaty of mutual assistance between Britain and Poland was signed at the Foreign Office. All Germans in Britain were ordered by the Nazi Government to return home, the German merchant navy was recalled, the Deutsche Lufthansa air services were suspended. Both the Tannenberg celebrations arranged for 27th August and the Nuremberg rally were cancelled. The British Consul General at Warsaw had earlier advised British subjects in Poland to return home.

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On the 26th and 27th August Sir Nevile Henderson's report was considered by the British Cabinet. Hitler, in a letter to M Daladier, the French Premier, had declared that Germany must have Danzig and the Corridor and, so to speak, damn the consequences. Rationing was begun in Germany and all means of transport were commandeered by the Government. During the last days of August the crisis was speeding towards its tragic climax. While Sir Nevile Henderson flew backwards and forwards between Berlin and London with communications from Hitler and the British Government, the Admiralty took control of all British shipping, declared the Mediterranean to be temporarily closed to British ships, and ordered all British ships in Baltic ports to leave as soon as possible. The evacuation of children from Paris was begun, the French railways were placed under military control, the Polish Government called more men to the colours and the Warsaw military experts declared that the country was now ready to meet any attack. In Germany, Herr Hitler established a Council of Ministers for Defence of the State, with Field-Marshal Göring as its chairman. France closed the frontier with Germany. The decks were being cleared for action. A menacing incident in Italy were the blackout exercises in Rome.

On 31st August the mobilization of the British Navy was complete, and more men were being called up in all the military services. Late that night came the announcement on the German

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wireless of a sixteen-point plan for settlement with Poland. Danzig was to be German at once, and the fate of the Corridor was to be decided by plebiscite a year hence, Germans who had lived there as long ago as January, 1918, being allowed to vote. No one had heard about this 'extremely moderate' plan, not even the Polish and British Governments. It soon appeared that the Germans had demanded that a Polish plenipotentiary should be sent to Berlin not later than midnight, without any information as to what was to be discussed. The Polish Ambassador in Berlin was not told of the sixteen points until the evening of the 31st. They were read over rapidly by Herr von Ribbentrop to Sir Nevile Henderson on Wednesday, but no written statement of them was supplied to him. And because no Polish plenipotentiary had come to discuss terms which had not been communicated to the Polish Government, those terms were considered by the Germans to have been rejected!

It was clear that Hitler meant war. On the night of the 31st the Germans broadcast stories about a Polish attack on the radio station at Gleiwitz, a German frontier town. A few hours later, towards dawn, the German radio stations broadcast, in German, English and other languages, what amounted to a declaration of war on Poland—a warning to aircraft flying over the Bay of Danzig, a defined strip of German territory, and the whole of Poland, and a similar warning to shipping in the Baltic. The Germans were then already

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invading Polish territory and bombing many undefended Polish towns.

On 1st September the evacuation of children from London and other danger areas was begun and the urgency being very great—as it was taken for granted that the Germans would attempt to bomb London—the exodus on the first day was far greater than had been anticipated. Thousands of people flocked to Whitehall to acclaim Mr Chamberlain as, with Mrs Chamberlain, he left Downing Street for the House of Commons. On 2nd September the world learned that, according to the Germans, they were not making war at all, only 'rectifying the Eastern frontier'!

The people of France and England, as well as all the neutral nations, were deeply anxious or amazed, according to their interest in the matter, when the 1st, then the 2nd of September passed without any declaration of war on the part of either Britain or France. There were those who were beginning to believe that the Western Democracies had after all decided to break their solemn promises and leave Poland to her fate. An appalling thought to all civilized people; but perhaps Herr von Ribbentrop was congratulating himself. He had always been convinced that Britain and France would not fight, and now. . . . But, of course, he knew that Mussolini was making a last-minute effort to save peace; and if he did, in fact, interpret the delay of the Democracies as an inclination to retreat, it was only because his limited intellect could not grasp

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that both Mr Chamberlain and M Daladier were anxious not to miss even the most slender chance to prevent war. However, Hitler's 'peace' proposals as conveyed through Mussolini, were such that on Sunday, 3rd September, Great Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany.

The complete unity of the British people of all parties and creeds in their determination to exterminate Nazism was reflected in the unanimity with which the House of Commons gave its support to the Government. Never before had the British people been so completely and un-animously agreed on any matter in their whole history. The same may be said of the French people. Neither in England nor France were there any demonstrations, any manifestations of the war fever that had been such a feature of the great war. No one was enthusiastic; but everyone was determined. The reason was, partly, that the peoples of civilized countries during the past six years have learned to think of the German people as an unfortunate nation that had fallen under the power of a horde of gangsters, an innocent nation that was helplessly suffering under a tyrannous rule which they were powerless to shake off. In other words, the peoples of England and France were, and are inclined to be sorry for the German people.

Let me digress here to explain why I think that this attitude is wholly wrong. It is not my intention to preach hatred; hatred injures the hater more than the hated. But I hold that the German people

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are as guilty of Nazism as they were of Kaiserism. They are as guilty of the war of 1939 as they were of the war of 1914, of the war of 1870 against France, of the war of 1866 against Austria, of the war of 1864 against Denmark—five wars within the memory of people living to-day! Would it be right to respect a family that produced one or two murderers in every generation? Would it be logical, would it be sane, to say, 'This is a nice, respectable family, and we are sorry for them, though their sons are killers whom we must hang'? The German people are such a 'family'. There is an element, a large element, among them who are guiltless, but the very fact that they are unable to shake off their gangster government proves that they are in a minority in Germany.

To revert to our subject, by 10th September the German-Polish war was in full swing. As had been expected for well known strategical reasons, the Polish Army was retreating practically all along the line, but the movement was carried out with great skill—this was proved by the small number of prisoners claimed by the Germans. Also, the Germans were being warned by their Press not to expect lightning success in Poland, as the consolidation of the gains would take 'a considerable time'. In the West, the French Army and Air Force had started operations against the Siegfried Line and were making steady progress. The various Foreign Legions that were being formed in France included a Czech, American and Italian Legion—the latter under the leadership of Colonel Garibaldi.

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The Germans fought—like Germans. For no matter whether their leader is the Kaiser or Hitler, the Germans are brutal in war. On 13th September a threat came from the 'Führer's Headquarters in Poland' to bomb 'open towns, markets and villages'. It was a threat which had already been carried out from the very beginning of the German attack on Poland, despite Hitler's promise that he was not going to bomb women and children. This was one of the things Hitler might have had in mind when, in his Danzig speech, he vaguely referred to some weapon that he could use against the Allies, but the Allies could not use against Germany. For, as Mr Neville Chamberlain said in the House of Commons a few days after the publication of Hitler's threat, Britain and France could never descend to attacking 'women, children and other civilians for purposes of terrorism'.

Naturally, Germany from the first had an immense superiority both in the air and as regards the mechanization of the land forces. But the Poles fought with courage and skill, as they have always done throughout their history. The army of Pomorze broke the German line and fought its way back to Warsaw with 1,000 German prisoners.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

### THE STAB IN THE BACK

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHAT WOULD HAVE happened on the Polish front if the Poles had been left to fight the Germans alone. The defence of Modlin, the glorious resistance of Warsaw, the siege on the Hela Peninsula, are probably a true indication. The Polish-German war might still have been in progress, with the Polish army entrenched on a shorter line and in a better strategic position; and the situation on the Western Front might also have been different at the end of September.

However, on 17th September Poland received a stab in the back. On that Sunday morning the Red Army crossed the Polish frontier in the north, south and centre. The Russians said that the Polish State had ceased to exist and that their object was to restore peace and order and to protect the Russians living in Poland. They also declared that they were still neutral in the European war. Further, Moscow alleged that the Polish Government had fled, had left their people in the lurch. Actually, the Polish Government was then still on Polish soil. The Russian invasion was an answer to those—and there were many, including a large proportion of non-Communists—who had refused to believe that the Nazi-Soviet Pact might mean that Russia was going to share in the fourth partition of Poland.

On 18th September Soviet and Nazi troops met at Brest-Litovsk. After this the break-up of the

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Polish Army was only to be expected. No one, not even the Germans, doubted the personal courage and fighting spirit of the Poles; but the overwhelming German superiority in arms and equipment, and the stab in the back with an army of four millions was too much. Many Polish soldiers crossed into Roumania and Hungary—they may soon be heard of again in France. Meanwhile, the Reds occupied Vilna in the North and in their rapid advance reached the Hungarian frontier.

On 19th September, Hitler made a long speech in Danzig, the city 'delivered' by him. He posed as a lover of peace and said that Britain made the war by encouraging Poland. His account of recent events was such that Mr Neville Chamberlain described it, with characteristic mildness, as inaccurate. Hitler's threat of a weapon which Germany could use against the Allies, but which the Allies could not use against her, has already been mentioned.

By the beginning of the last week in September it had become clear that Hitler had made a very bad bargain by his pact with Stalin. The Soviet had occupied more than half of Poland, with the cities of Vilna, Bialystok, Brest-Litovsk, Lublin and Lwow (Lemberg); the Red Army was in possession of the greater part of the Polish oil wells; and it was also barring Hitler's way to Roumania and the Black Sea in that direction.

The surrender of Warsaw after a glorious defence that will go down in history as a shining example of all the highest qualities of mind, body and spirit

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in a people inspired by a sacred loyalty, marked the end of the German-Soviet Polish war. Poland for the moment lies prostrate. But as Poland's Ambassador in London, Count E. Raczyński, said in his broadcast speech at the beginning of the conflict:

'Poland's spirit will not break down under the strain. She is going to remain faithful to her traditions and her Allies whatever happens and however the fortunes of war may vary. . . . Since 1st September my country has been incessantly battered by practically the whole German Army and continuously bombed by its entire air force. The losses suffered by Poland in territory and economic resources are certainly great, and owing to the crushing superiority of the enemy in equipment the Polish Armies did not have as yet a chance of making full use of their skill and daring of manœuvre. They are, after all, fighting single-handed the largest mechanized army in the world, supported by the German Air Force, built at a cost of hundreds of millions of pounds.

'But our resistance has not been broken. Reserves are called in, the troops are occupying new positions, and the fighting goes on. Many foreigners who have the freedom of nations at heart are joining the Polish ranks. Poland turned a new leaf in recent European history, for Poland was the first nation which dared to defy Hitler and meet his attack with fire.

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'The old friend of Poland, France, and her new ally, Great Britain, knew that by helping Poland they were defending liberty, and they knew that no cause could be more popular among the nations of the world than that of freedom, which Poland symbolizes in the struggle against Nazi invasion. Poland is one of a limited number of the great historic nations of Europe, and it would not be true to itself if it acted differently. History has proved that a nation like Poland can neither be destroyed nor permanently oppressed.'

Are not some parts of this speech out of date to-day, when Poland has been defeated? No. It is still true that *'reserves are called in, the troops are occupying new positions, and the fighting goes on'*. Nazi Germany will soon discover the hard, implacable truth of this sentence, though the 'reserves' may not be in barracks, the 'troops' not in uniform and the 'fighting' not under conditions of overwhelming superiority for Hitlerism.

The Soviet action against Poland, in view of the peculiar political morality of dictator countries, ought to have surprised the world less than it has done. Partly, it was a repetition of the Soviet's earlier attempt, in 1920, to grab a large slice of Poland. Then it was dealing with Poland single-handed and was beaten back; this time Poland was already at grips with a mighty enemy and could oppose no effective resistance to the Red

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Army. The 'natural' reason for the Soviet intervention, however, was that Russia and Germany throughout centuries of history have always joined hands against Poland, even when mutual hatred between them was quite as fierce as it was before the present war. In any case, such collaboration was predicted by, among others, Mr Cecil F. Melville who, writing in 1932 (*The Russian Face of Germany*, Wishart) said:

'At the time of writing interest is growing in the rising star of Herr Adolf Hitler, the Nazi leader. Herr Hitler is regarded as the protagonist par excellence of the Right against the Left in Germany and as a Hitlerist regime is anticipated before long it may perhaps be argued that the Dritte Reich of the Nazis, the sworn enemies of Communism, would not tolerate a Reichswehr-Red Army connection. Such a conclusion would be inaccurate to the last degree. . . . Stalin the realist would have no qualms in collaborating with a Hitlerist Germany. . . . A Hitlerist Germany would have no qualms in continuing the collaboration with Soviet Russia.'

The diplomatic technique of the Soviet in this matter is of interest because it shows, in its rank hypocrisy, distinct traces of the Hitlerian school. This is clear from the Note handed by M Potemkin, the Soviet Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs, to the Polish Ambassador in Moscow at dawn on 17th September:

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‘The Polish-German war’ [the Note read] ‘has revealed the rottenness of the Polish State and their Government.

‘During ten days of the war Poland lost all her industrial districts and cultural centres.

‘Warsaw as the capital no longer exists, and the Polish Government have broken up and no longer show any sign of life.

‘This means that the Polish State and their Government no longer exist. In consequence, agreements signed between the Soviet Union and Poland have become invalid.

‘Abandoned and deprived of leadership, Poland has been converted into an easy prey for all manner of events and surprises which might constitute a threat to the U.S.S.R.

‘Therefore, although up to the present neutral, the Soviet Government can no longer face such facts neutrally.

‘In addition, the Soviet Government cannot consider with indifference the fate of their blood relatives—the Ukrainians and White Russians living on Polish territory, left to their own fate without any protection.

‘In such circumstances the Soviet Government have directed the High Command of the Red Army to take under their protection the life and property of the population of Western Ukraine and Western White Russia.

‘Simultaneously the Soviet Government intend to take all measures to free the Polish people from the war into which they have been dragged

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by their misguided leaders, and give them an opportunity of beginning a peaceful life.'

That was the document handed by the Soviet to the Ambassador of a State which in its opinion did not exist. However, a minor illogicality like this, and even the hypocrisy of the Soviet's anxiety 'to free the Polish people', etc., matters little as compared with Russia's flagrant breach of the Soviet-Polish Non-aggression Pact of 1932, which was extended later until 31st December 1945. That there was nothing vague about that Pact is proved by the following passage from the statement of the Polish Embassy in London in reply to the Soviet Note:

'By the convention concluded in London on 3rd July 1933, Soviet Russia and Poland agreed on a definition of aggression which clearly stamped as an act of aggression any encroachment of the territory of one of the contracting parties by the armed forces of the other, and furthermore that no consideration of a political, military, economic or any other order can in any circumstances serve as a pretext or excuse for committing an act of aggression.

'Therefore, by the act of wanton aggression committed this morning, the Soviet Government stands self-condemned as a violator of its international obligations, thus contradicting all the moral principles upon which Soviet Russia pretended to base her foreign policy since her admittance into the League of Nations.'

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In other words, the Soviet had adopted the 'scrap of paper' policy which had been carried on for so long by her German friends.

But what about the Russian people? How did they take the news of their Government's alliance with the declared enemies of Communism and its attack on Poland? The answer is that no one knows, and that the Soviet Government certainly attached no importance to the views of the Russian people. It made no attempt to explain anything, but merely announced accomplished facts. On the morning of 17th September, M Molotov, Soviet Premier and Foreign Commissar, broadcast to the Russian nation the following:

'Comrades, men and women citizens of our great country:

'The events arising from the Polish-German war have revealed the internal insolvency and obvious impotence of the Polish State. The Polish ruling circles have suffered bankruptcy.

'In the early part of September, when a partial calling-up of Red Army reserves was undertaken in the Ukraine, White Russia and four other military areas, the situation in Poland was not clear, and this calling-up was a precautionary measure.

'Nobody could have expected that the Polish State would have revealed such impotence and such a swift collapse as has now taken place all over Poland.

'But inasmuch as this collapse is a fact and

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Polish statesmen have revealed their utter bankruptcy and are incapable of changing the situation in Poland, our Red Army, having received large reinforcements as a result of the recent calling-up of reserves must perform with credit the honourable duty laid upon them.

‘The Government express the firm conviction that our workers’ and peasants’ Red Army will once again display their might with conscientiousness and discipline, and that in the performance of their great emancipatory task they will distinguish themselves by new feats of heroism and glory.

‘The Government handed copies of its Note to the Polish Ambassador, to all the Governments with which the U.S.S.R. has diplomatic relations, declaring that it will pursue a policy of neutrality towards all these countries. This determines our recent steps in foreign policy.’

That was all. Nor did the Soviet Press make any particular efforts to justify the Soviet Government’s sudden *volte face* and Stalin’s sudden friendship with Hitler, the man who had denounced him and all his works in the most violent terms for years. Probably, the many ‘liquidations’ of recent years have taught the Russian people the wisdom of agreeing with everything their ‘great comrade Stalin’ does or says.

There are many people in all countries who could not understand the flight of the Polish Government to Roumania at a time when the

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Polish troops were still fighting. Was it a betrayal of the Polish people? Was it sheer cowardice? The answer is contained in the following essential passages in the proclamation issued to the Polish nation by the President of the Republic, M Ignacy Moscicki, after the Russian invasion of Poland:

‘From the passing deluge we must safeguard the symbols of the Republic and the source of constitutional authority. . . . Therefore, with a heavy heart, I have resolved to transfer the seat of the President of the Republic and of the highest executive authority of the State to a place offering conditions that assure to them full sovereignty and enable them to watch over the interests of the Republic. . . . Not for the first time in our history, we are faced with an invasion inundating our country both from the west and the east. . . . Citizens, I am aware that throughout the hardest ordeals you will preserve the same strength of spirit, the same dignity and lofty pride by which you have earned the admiration of the world. On every one of you to-day rests the duty of guarding the honour of the nation, no matter what may befall you, Almighty Providence will render justice to our cause.’

It will be seen that it was the duty of the Polish Government to leave Polish soil once it became certain that the only alternative was the destruction of ‘the symbols of the Republic and the source of the constitutional authority’. It was the intention

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of the Government to transfer its seat to Paris and lead the struggle from there, and, above all, to conduct a diplomatic campaign in the interests of Poland. It is not for the first time that the Poles have fought for their liberty, both with the sword and by diplomatic means, from the democratic countries. The campaign carried on by the Poles against Frederick the Great in London on the Danzig question at the beginning of the nineteenth century failed; but in 1939 the Poles are appealing to a different London, and they have behind them the mighty power of the British Empire and France, against which Poland's oppressors cannot prevail.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

### THE ATROCITY CAMPAIGN

THE GERMAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST POLAND BEGAN long before the crisis which led to war. Not long after Field Marshal Göring's visit to Poland as the guest of the President of the Republic, the Press hounds of Dr Goebbels were unleashed. By 1938 abuse and vilification of Poland had reached a crescendo of violence surpassing even the previous anti-British and anti-Jewish campaigns. At present Dr Goebbels is in disgrace on account of his lack of skill in smuggling his ill-gotten fortune out of Germany and his consequent discovery, but in 1938 and during the months preceding Hitler's attack on Poland, he led the anti-Polish Press campaign with such a reptilian venom, such a complete disregard not only of truth, but also of common decency, that few of his tirades can be quoted in their entirety. A similar Press campaign had been part of the Nazi technique in preparing for the rape of Austria and Czechoslovakia, and it was clear that Nazi Germany was determined to 'settle accounts' with Poland. The interruption of this campaign in consequence of representations made by M Lipski, Polish Ambassador in Berlin, and one of the friends of the Wilhelmstrasse, deceived nobody. It was soon resumed with renewed vehemence. Below we quote a few passages from the Goebbelian efforts that filled the German newspapers for many months, omitting, of course, the more obscene parts. They give an insight into the mentality of

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the Nazis and might also make the reader wonder at Colonel Beck's attitude towards Germany. In an article emanating from the Wilhelmstrasse, at a time when the German-Polish pact of friendship was still in force, we read:

'A State which is represented by an inferior personnel can only exist in disputed territory so long as its neighbours are on the same modest level. A State which is ideologically unrestrained and dishonest must collapse as soon as there are real political ideas knocking on its walls. Both apply to Poland.'

In another article, similarly inspired, and entitled 'Poland Runs Amok', we read:

'On the night of 12th February 1939 Polish students of the Technical High School in Danzig saw over a café in Langfuhr (Danzig) a sign-board with the witty (sic!) inscription, "Poles and Dogs Not Admitted". After this the Polish Press started a planned agitation. A fortnight after the "discovery" in Langfuhr the windows of the German Embassy in Warsaw were smashed, similar demonstrations against Germany having previously taken place all over Poland.

'Poland since the beginning of this year has been systematically preparing for a conflict with the Reich. [Sic!] The storm of anti-German excesses which began in February, rose to a

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tornado at the end of March, after the establishment of the Bohemian-Moravian Protectorate, and since then seems to have thrown Poland into a state of unrestrained hysteria, was started by responsible Polish Government circles and deliberately guided in all its phases. . . . As the inclination for an aggressive policy against the mighty German Reich was entirely absent among the Polish masses, whose hearts had sunk to their boots after the sad experience of their Czech "brothers", this situation had to be remedied by 'propaganda'." . . . It is obvious that a Great Power of the rank of the German Reich cannot tolerate provocations like the mobilization of an army on her frontier. It is an impossible situation when German commercial aeroplanes cannot accomplish their daily flights even outside the Polish frontier without being shot at. We need not say a single word as to the menace to the life of Danzig which exists at present because the Polish divisions have already broken the peace by surrounding the territory of Danzig. After the experiences of a certain Herr Benes, no one will suppose that such impudence will go unpunished, particularly as the "technical" means for an emphatic reprimand are fully available.'

And so on. The article goes on to quote many cases of alleged savagery by Poles against German inhabitants of Poland. All the charges, as they

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stand, would be branded by any sane person as untrue, even without any evidence to that effect, as it must be obvious that the government of a small State would not dream of attacking a powerful neighbour or of establishing a reign of terror over the nationals of that neighbour. The complete disregard of truth by the Nazi propagandists, which was entirely in accordance with the doctrine laid down by Hitler in his *Mein Kampf*, was manifested in the anti-Polish campaign in a hundred different ways. The German historian of the future will view with helpless despair the degradation of the German people as reflected in the lying propaganda of the Nazi gangsters. There was the official dictum which was re-printed in practically every German newspaper, and quoted by the entire world Press, to the effect that, 'Poland in 1939 is what she was in 1762, a cultural disgrace to the world, a danger to the peace of Europe, and a misfortune for her own inhabitants.' This about a nation whose moral civilization was always greater than that of Germany and whose cultural achievements have been recognized by the entire civilized world.

But Nazi propaganda was not content to abuse and vilify the Poles of Poland alone. It extended even to the handful of Poles living in Roumania, and the Nazis made every effort to stir up the Roumanians against this minority, as well as to sow hatred against them in Germany itself. In this connection the German Propaganda Ministry issued the following:

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'In Czernowicz and the territory between this city and the frontier there are to-day a total of 25,000 Poles. This small handful of Poles, which, characteristically enough, includes many Poles from Poland, behave in a manner which might sometimes create the impression that this part of Roumania was ruled not by the Rumanians but by the Poles.

'Naturally, Polish propaganda in this territory is directed above all against the German minority living in the Bukovina, and in order to provide the means required for this Polish propaganda, collections are from time to time organized by the various Polish associations.

'But in addition to these provocations, the Polish minority in Northern Roumania also pursues a deliberate policy of Polonization, exploiting for this purpose the Catholic Church and its institutions in the most unscrupulous manner.'

The article goes on to give details of this alleged Polish 'crime' in Roumania, stating that on the occasion of religious procession the Polish consul in Czernowicz walked side by side with the Polish priest and that other members of the procession carried small Polish national flags. The Polish minority are also charged with resisting and countering the Nazi propaganda against them! It concludes with the words:

'That is the position to-day in Czernowicz and the Bukovina. With true Polish impudence

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and megalomania a small Polish minority is persecuting (!) everything German that they can find. There can be no doubt as to the ultimate outcome of this struggle, but it is nevertheless regrettable that the Roumanian authorities have not yet intervened with the requisite energy in order to make an end of these chauvinistic activities of the Poles in the Bukovina for ever.'

All this goes to prove, if proof be needed, that Hitler had planned the war of 1939 months and years ago. Hitler in his last broadcast speech endeavoured to prove that the guilt for his attack on Poland lay with Britain and France and, indeed, the entire German Press has been repeating the same story in various forms. This forcibly reminds me of the German efforts after the Great War to disprove the so-called 'war guilt lie.' During the years 1924-1925 the German Foreign Office in Berlin placed at my disposal a large number of documents which were supposed to contain proof positive that Germany had been dragged into war by Great Britain. Republican Germany would have been inclined to let the sleeping dog of the war guilt question lie, but its government was intent on influencing foreign opinion in favour of workaday Germany, in the ultimate hope that Reparation payments might be reduced. I gave the documents my most concentrated attention and eventually returned them to the gentlemen of the Wilhelmstrasse, many of

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whom, by the way, belonged to the 'old guard' of diplomats, with the polite remark that perhaps it would be best for them to bury the war guilt and colonial questions together with the hatchet and devote themselves to the up-building of the New Germany. The 'evidence' I had been given was substantially of the same character as that of the Nazis to-day, who, in essence, argue that the Allies are guilty of starting the present war because their promise of support to Poland prevented the latter country from surrendering to Hitler, thereby obliging Hitler to make war on her!

To revert to Hitler's speech (delivered in Danzig on the 19th September 1939) I feel I am rendering a service to German historians of the future by reproducing the British official commentary on it:

'Herr Hitler's speech is full of the crass misstatements which usually fall from his lips, and to which the world has now become accustomed. It is surprising that a man in his responsible position should venture to convict himself so palpably out of his own mouth. Thus, for example, we now hear from Herr Hitler:

"At that time there lived in Poland a man of energy and action. I tried, in common with Marshal Pilsudski, to find a solution that would secure peace. In this we put aside the Versailles Treaty and attempted to reach a temporary solution.

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“After the death of Marshal Pilsudski, however, the mortal fight against all Germans in Poland began anew. This fight naturally embittered and ruined the relations between the two nations. It was possible for us only with difficulty to look on while the German minority was barbarously ill-treated. The world, which is always shaken to the depths when a Polish Jew who has recently emigrated to Germany is deported remained dumb in the face of this ill-treatment.”

‘So says Herr Hitler. The world remained dumb in the face of this ill-treatment for the very good reason that from the time of Marshal Pilsudski’s death until this spring Herr Hitler represented his relations with Poland as excellent. No word was said in Germany of the maltreatment of Germans in Poland. On the contrary, this is how Herr Hitler himself described his friendship for Poland:

‘In the Reichstag on 21st May 1935: “We recognize the Polish State as the home of a great patriotic nation with the understanding and cordial friendship of candid nationalists.”

‘In the Reichstag on 20th February, 1938: “In the fifth year which follows the coming into force of the first great international convention concluded by the Reich, we state with genuine admiration that our relations with that State with which we had, perhaps, the greatest antagonism, are not only characterised by a

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detente, but that, in the course of the past years, these relations resulted in a more and more friendly drawing together.

“I know full well that this is chiefly due to the fact that at that time there was not a Western Parliamentarian in Warsaw, but a Polish Marshal whose commanding personality realized the importance for Europe of such a detente between Germany and Poland.

“The value of this was questioned by many at the time, but it has now passed the test, and I may well say that since the League of Nations has ceased its continuous efforts at disturbance in Danzig and appointed a new Commissioner, a man of personality, this most dangerous place for the peace of Europe has entirely lost its menacing significance.

“The Polish State respects the national conditions in this country, and that city and Germany respect Polish rights. Thus it was possible to find the way to an understanding which, emanating from Danzig, in spite of the assertions of many mischief-makers, has succeeded in removing all friction between Germany and Poland and made it possible to work together in true amity.”

‘Once again, in the Sportpalast on 26th September 1938, Herr Hitler said: “Poland was ruled by a man and not by a democracy. With his collaboration it was possible to bring about, in less than one year, an agreement which, to begin with, excluded the danger of a clash for

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a period of ten years. We are all convinced that this agreement will result in a lasting appeasement.

“We realize that there are two nations which must live side by side and neither of which is in a position to eliminate the other. A State with thirty-three million inhabitants will always strive to have an outlet to the sea. It was therefore necessary to find the way to an understanding. This way has been found and will be consolidated. . . . This was really a peaceful action which is worth more than the whole of the babbling at the Palace of the League of Nations at Geneva.”

‘To return to the present speech’, the commentary goes on, ‘Herr Hitler asks further on, with reference to his proposal for a settlement: “I do not know in what state of mind the Polish Government could have been to reject such proposals.”’

‘The answer is that the Polish Government had before their eyes the shameful betrayal of the solemn assurances given by the German Government at Munich. They knew that these demands were only the preliminary to further exactions.’

‘If Herr Hitler had wished to inspire confidence in his word he should have been less reckless with his earlier promises. “Germany has no further territorial ambitions in Europe” was an undertaking which has been broken too flagrantly and too often.’

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The British commentary does not deal with the other untruths of Hitler's Danzig speech. Incidentally, when I interviewed Hitler at his private home in the Augustinerstrasse, Munich, in 1926, he spoke to me at length about all of Germany's problems as he then conceived them, but had little to say about Poland. In April of the present year I was assured in circles close to Hitler that he did not even think of attacking Poland, as he was determined to avoid war at all costs; all he wanted was to force concessions from Poland. That was immediately after the Polish mobilization. On 19th September he was able to boast to the world that he had defeated Poland.

The smallest of the lies contained in his speech was to the effect that the Polish Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Smigly-Rydz had fled from Poland. Actually, the Marshal was then still with the Army in Poland, directing the military operations.

An earlier German lie, broadcast to the world long before Hitler's Danzig speech, was the report that Warsaw had fallen. All the world knows how premature that report was. In this connection a great deal has been heard about the heroic Lord Mayor of Warsaw, but little of General Sosnowski, a comrade of the late Marshal Pilsudski, who proclaimed himself dictator in the Warsaw territory after the departure of the Government; or of General Czuma, who was in command of the Warsaw garrison since the

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beginning of the war and throughout her glorious defence. He declared, 'We will resist to the utmost'. And he did. General Czuma, unlike the better known Polish Army leader, was never involved in politics.

## *Chapter Seventeen*

### THE STRUGGLE GOES ON

THE NAZI FOREIGN MINISTER AND FORMER GERMAN Ambassador to London, Joachim von Ribbentrop, in his Danzig speech of 24th October vehemently denied what all the world knows to be true, namely, that Britain and France were fighting Hitlerism, and Hitlerism alone, and that Hitlerism has been a menace to the security of the rest of Europe ever since its accession to power in Germany. In the same breath, von Ribbentrop blared forth in gloating triumph the story of the rape of Poland, claiming that the German Army had finished with Poland in three weeks. Actually, the "heroic" German Army took four weeks to defeat not the whole of Poland, isolated as she was from all outside help, but only half Poland, while the other half was invaded and subdued by the overwhelming might of the Soviets. Almost without firing a single shot, Russia took the Western Ukraine and Galicia and, of course, the oil wells of Boryslaw. But while the German and Russian military missions held their appointment at Brest Litowsk to settle the demarcation line, Warsaw and Modlin were holding out. Warsaw, under its heroic Lord Mayor, Stefan Starzynski, stood the German siege for weeks, despite a shortage of food, tragic difficulties with its water supply, a constant artillery bombardment, and the Nazi "birds of prey" which rained bombs on its women and children. There were other islands of resistance, and even after the

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fall of Warsaw and Modlin the Germans had a great deal to do in connection with the so-called mopping up operations.

The cost of this resistance to the Nazis was stated by Hitler, in his Reichstag speech, to have been little more than 10,000 dead and a proportionate number of other casualties. The alleged account of the Nazi war against Poland balances no more than Germany's economic accounts. However, this incidental lie by Hitler is as nothing compared with other and bigger lies, including his assurance at the beginning of the conflict that he was not going to make war on women and children. Indeed, the whole European situation to-day is the outcome of Hitlerian lying and broken promises and it is astonishing that, in the circumstances, Hitler was able to assume that Britain and France would or might listen to any "peace" proposals from him. This at a time when the German Army and the Gestapo were only just beginning their reign of terror in the occupied territories, confiscating, pillaging and "liquidating", a régime which has only been intensified since. Hitler was convinced that the Western Democracies would accept the *fait accompli* of his conquest of Poland. He could not bring himself to believe that civilized countries are not so dishonest and immoral as Nazi Germany, just as he could not believe that Britain and France would go to war on account of Poland and in defence of a mere principle.

In contrast with Hitler's "understatement"

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concerning Nazi losses, it is freely admitted that Poland lost tens of thousands of men in killed and wounded, and also tens of thousands of women and children. It is freely admitted that hundreds of small towns and villages in Poland were completely destroyed, although they were of no military importance; that the loss of civilian lives has been enormous because the Nazi bombers attacked with particular savagery the peasants escaping from the war areas in carts and on foot; that many Polish people died when the Nazis bombed their churches, hospitals, schools, and hospital trains; that hundreds were executed on the pretext that they were *franc-tireurs*; and that the Nazis gained immense stores of food by stripping the population of all they had, leaving them to starve. The Poles admit all the losses arising from these "heroic" Nazi acts.

Yet despite all this the Polish war is not over yet. The Nazis have crushed armed resistance in Poland itself, and have driven her President and Government out of the country. But there is now a new Polish President and a new Polish Government and there are new Polish Legions in the field. The sympathy of the civilized world rallied round Poland from the first, and Poland's cause was espoused even by those who had been most sorely affected by the disastrous foreign policy of Colonel Beck, and even by the Czechs, whom Poland had antagonized by her seizure of Teschen in 1938. To-day, the new Polish Government is receiving every assistance to carry

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on its war against Nazism, and the Czechs, her enemies of yesterday, are fighting side by side with the Polish Legions.

The fate of Poland has taught Europe that if Hitlerism were allowed to survive, any country which the Nazis chose to regard as part of the German *Lebensraum* would be in hourly danger of destruction, and the whole civilized world, including Hitler's former allies and friends, is praying for an Allied victory that will root out this menace to civilization for ever. If, before Hitler's wanton attack on Poland, Nazi Germany still had one or two friends who attached some value to her friendship, she lost them when, after years of fierce denunciation of Bolshevism as the menace to civilization which it was her special mission to combat, Hitler made friends with Soviet Russia. It is impossible to foretell the ultimate consequences of this most astounding reversal of policy and breach of faith in history, but its immediate results have been to place three small nations under the dominance of Soviet Russia. The fact that Hitler has lost more than he has gained through his Russian alliance is beside the point. What is important is the fact that so long as Hitlerism survives, it will remain a danger to Europe and civilization, a danger even to the Germans themselves, within and without the Reich. The forced resettlement of the Germans of the Baltic States shows that. German families who have lived in these States for centuries have been brutally uprooted, compelled to abandon

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their homes and possessions at forty-eight hours' notice, in order to realize an alleged ideal, but actually in order to help a mad dog over a financial and economic stile. The Germans of Hungary, Roumania and Jugoslavia are threatened with the same fate and they, too, may soon be refugees in Nazi Germany. Gdynia, creation of Polish enterprise and toil, which the Nazis now call *Gotenhafen*, has become a clearing port for foreign Germans from the Baltic States who are unwillingly returning "home".

Nor was Poland's sacrifice in vain from the practical, military point of view. It enabled the Allies to carry out the mobilization of their forces undisturbed. It also enabled the Allied Staffs to observe the German lightning war methods and take suitable measures. Moreover, the Poles inflicted heavy losses on the Nazi Army. According to Italian sources, these amounted to 180,000 casualties, including 1,000 airmen. The Germans also lost at least 400 aeroplanes, 1,000 tanks and other war material.

At all events, all the world knows that until Poland is resurrected and rebuilt, Germany will remain a menace to all European peoples. Britain and France will not lay down the sword until Nazism has been crushed and Germany made harmless. For the second great war to end war will be as useless as the first, unless the German "family taint" is dealt with and humanity made safe against the possibility of another gangster government attaining power in Germany.

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Poland is fortunate in having such mighty champions as Britain and France. At last she is reaping the harvest of her untold sacrifices as the bulwark of Christianity and the bulwark of democracy.

But—and that is the whole meaning of this modest essay—even without that help, defeated Poland is stronger than victorious Nazi Germany. The Polish people stand for ideals that have always been sacred to civilized humanity—Christianity, Freedom, Democracy; Nazi Germany has no ideals beyond violence and a lust for power. The Polish people glory in their historical and spiritual past, they are the people of Sobieski and Pilsudski, of inspired poets and writers, a people conscious of their Messianic mission; the Germans of to-day have denied all that was great and fine in their past, they are no longer the people of Luther and Goethe, but a nation ruled by the spirit of Horst Wessel, the prostitute's bully, and Schlageter, the brute, who reached for his gun when he heard the word 'culture'.

Yes, the Polish nation is stronger in its defeat than Nazi Germany in its hour of triumph. It will have accomplished its Messianic mission when, marching over the dead body of German Nazism, it will bend its energies to the up-building of an independent Poland that will endure.

# IS POLAND LOST?

*by*

PHILIP PANETH

IN this book Dr. Paneth reveals the political, economic, social and cultural life of a nation which has hitherto been largely disregarded by its present allies. During his visits to Poland the author was received by Pilsudski, Skladkowski, Beck, Smigly-Ridz and other leading personalities, all of whom convinced him that Poland can never be permanently crushed by foreign oppression.

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